ST. LEON:

A Drama.

IN THREE ACTS.

PRICE FIVE SHILLINGS.

To Miss Kelly with the Author's best regards

ST. LEON:

A DRAMA.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The idea of this Drama was suggested by GODWIN's novel of St. LEON.

ST. LEON:

A Drama.

IN THREE ACTS.

Will fortune never come with both hands full,
But write her fair words still in foulest letters?
She either gives a stomach and no food—
Such are the poor in health—or else a feast,
And takes away the stomach—such the rich
That have abundance and enjoy it not.

SHAKSPEARE.

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DEDICATION.

My dear Miss Kelly.

But for your approbation, the following Drama would never have been printed. I therefore dedicate it to you as an act of justice, as well as of gratitude; and moreover, because I shall be proud to see your name associated with the humble production of one who deeply regrets, that, in your proposed retirement from the stage, it will lose its brightest ornament. I trust, however, that the Dramatic School over which you are about to preside, will restore the pure and legitimate Drama to her forfeited honours, and that your brows will be ultimately crowned with the laurels of an achievement which must place you among the best benefactors of your country.

I am,

My dear Miss Kelly,

Yours very faithfully,

THE AUTHOR.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

St. Leon. A French nobleman of fallen fortunes.

Charles St. Leon. His son.

Don Felix. In love with Gertrude.

Bernardine. A domestic of St. Leon.

Francisco. } Spies of the Inquisition.
Perez. }

Master of the Inquisition.

De Luque. A rebel chief.

Guzman. } His comrades.
Casca. }

WOMEN.

Madame St. Leon.

Gertrude St. Leon.

Joanna.

Spirits, Villagers, Officers of the Inquisition, Soldiers, Rebels, &c.

Scene.—*Near Madrid.*

ST. LEON:

A Drama.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The curtain rises to slow music, and discovers ST. LEON *in a gloomy grotto, fantastically decorated, around which are hung various instruments of experimental chemistry. On the fire appears a large crucible, which he seems to watch with intense anxiety. After a pause, he takes it off and breaks it. A loud peal of thunder heard.* ST. LEON *starts and rushes forward.*

ST. LEON (*alone*).

AT length my toils are past! the teeming earth
Has yielded up her secrets to my view,
And art o'er nature triumphs. In that hour,

When on the glorious battlements of heaven
Night hangs her lamps, and o'er the ethereal plain,
Spirits of good men glimmer through the stars—
When silence lulls in counterfeited death
Each busy sense, and steals man from his woes,
Through the long lapse of twice twelve years, I've toiled,
Absorbed in alchemy, till my spent soul,
Struggling beneath its load, had all but burst
Its wretched prison-house, to seek repose
Beyond the starry mansions of the skies.

Music. SPIRITS *descend.*

FIRST SPIRIT.

Mortal! a voice, in awful thunder given,
Has warned us from the lower courts of heaven,
That thou hast searched the hoards of science o'er,
And, from the treasures of her sacred store,
Dragged those ingredients forth to human sight,
Fixed, until now, within the realms of night,
And formed a menstruum by thy cunning skill,
That shall transmute the metals at thy will;
Make brass the glowing tint of gold assume,
And drossy lead the silver's chaster bloom.
Frail worm! who boldly hast aspired to rise
From earth's dull orb, and gaze beyond the skies,
Rashness like thine demands a heavier doom
Than fate awards, except beyond the tomb.

ST. LEON.

Unearthly power! I deprecate the wrath
Whose burst is charged with death! I am not proof
Against the common destiny of man.
I know that he who moulded this shrunk frame,
And into it transfused a living soul,
Shall mingle its material elements
With the dull dust, on which his hand did stamp
The impress of the Godhead. I adore
Thy God and mine; and though I may have dared,
When hope within my seared and barren heart
Lay buried, to o'erlook his wise decrees,
I erred not wittingly, but by a fierce
And maddening impulse urged, strove, night and day,
From the rank bitters that o'erflow the cup
Which pining misery forces to our lip,
To draw one sweet:—long had I sucked the dregs,
And "wrung them out."—Oh! what "a cup of trembling!"

SECOND SPIRIT.

Thy end is answered, all thy toils repaid;
The reddening bolt of vengeance is delayed,
Nor shall it fall, if wisely thou pursue
That mazy path where virtue holds the clue.
Abuse not what unconscious chance has given,
Nor strive to change the just decrees of heaven.

ST. LEON.

I dared not heaven's displeasure! I have toiled
Through years of patient drudgery to pay
The bitter penalty of crime, enforced
By the stern gripe of penury. These hands
Have delved the niggard soil, while the fierce sun
Glared o'er me, till the spirit of my strength
Has oozed through the parched pores, and left the fount
Of life all but a dried-up spring. These bones
Have ached to torture, and the withering cramp
Has twisted up my sinews, till the sweat
Has started through them to the blistered skin,
Which, ere it gathered to a crystal, dried
The torture-drop, and left a smooth, scarred spot,
The cicatrice of deep, indwelling woe.
I have striven hard with want, till the new light
Of science has made clear the cumbered road,
To endless riches and perennial joy.

THIRD SPIRIT.

Gold is man's frequent bane; a deadly curse
Oft lurks unseen within the rich man's purse.
The garb of penury is virtue's own;
She meekly buckles on her sheenless zone,
And bends to drudgery with tearless eye,
Patient of ill, and meek in misery.

Make her thy prototype! be timely wise!
O'er thee impends the vengeance of the skies
Shouldst thou abuse that power, so singly given,
Fatal to any but the race of heaven.

ST. LEON.

May their worst vengeance fall if I abuse
The sacred trust, or fail to render up
A good account, when called to give it in.
I'll shower new blessings o'er a needy world,
And place its sad indwellers one step higher
Towards that pre-eminence to which, time o'er,
Its glorious architect will elevate
The structure of his mightier energies.

FOURTH SPIRIT.

Rash mortal, hold! thou never canst create,
Nor sway the immutable decrees of fate.
Creation's laws are fixed; whate'er thy will,—
Whate'er thy pride may tempt thee to fulfil,
They'll stand unchanged:—pause ere you rashly vie
With him who hung yon shining orbs on high.
Thou'rt fixed to earth, must grovel here below,
And clank, at every step, the gyves of woe.
Be wise and prosper! on this mystic scroll

(*Drops a scroll at his feet.*)

Cast thy firm eye, till, branded on thy soul,

The secret fixes, there to live and grow
'Till time's exhausted stream shall cease to flow.

(*Music.* SPIRITS *rise and disappear.* ST. LEON *takes up the scroll and reads.*)

ST. LEON.

My natal star grows bright! here are inscribed
In characters by an Almighty hand,
The ingredients of a powerful compound, which,
Once quaffed, bestows eternity of youth;
Still subject to the casualties of life,
Though shielded from disease and natural death.
These are the annexed conditions; that the power
Of changing dross to gold, and what's contained
In this (*raises the scroll*), be ne'er divulged to living man.

[*Exit*

SCENE II.

(*An apartment in* ST. LEON'S *house, meanly furnished.* MADAME ST. LEON *enters.*)

MADAME ST. LEON (*alone*).

How misery dogs her prey! our mortal track
Is chequered with the deep and varied print,

Which shows how hourly close upon her scent
The beldam hunts us down. Death heals all woes,
But he, dull tardy minister, delays
To sever the tough link which holds us on
That boisterous passage, where the shattered bark
Strives 'gainst a perilous element. 'Tis in vain
We tug and strain against those whelming ills
Which hang on our career, like lowering clouds
Poised in mid-heaven, within whose pregnant womb
Grumbles the pent up storm. The hand is strong
That forged the quick revolving wheels of life,
And fixed the buoyant but imprisoned soul
Within this crust of flesh! Alas! my husband!
Why art thou changed? I once was all to thee;
Mine ear received thy secrets, and my breast
Was made the daily storehouse of thy thoughts—
Alas! how altered now! (ST. LEON *enters.*) Save thee, ST. LEON!

ST. LEON.

Bless thee, my Emily, but why so sad?

MADAME ST. LEON.

Have I no cause? In sooth, my spirit droops
To tell thee who it is that makes me sad.
Ask thy own heart, ST. LEON, and 'twill wring
The answer from thy conscience.

ST. LEON.

This from thee?

Can I have stung thee, dame, to sadness? no!
Thou canst not libel thus the love I bear thee.

MADAME ST. LEON.

St. Leon! once you loved me: in our days
Of happier life, when fortune wore her smiles,
And, basking in the sunshine of our joys,
No chill of misery met our glowing souls,
We were each other's idols. In an hour
Of madness, though thy better sense rebelled,
Didst thou stake all upon one luckless cast,
And sharpers took thy substance. Did I then
Meet thee with frowns and tongue distracting taunts,
Shower down reproaches on thy wildered ear,
Or once upbraid thee with thy house's ruin?
Did I e'er fail to greet thee with a smile,
When keen remorse had loosed its worm within?
Nay, thou remember'st how I cheered thee then,
And crushed the reptile when it gnawed and stung thee.

ST. LEON.

Spare me the retrospect;—it sears my brain,
Rouses the dormant fires of anguish there,
And throws me back upon the damning stings
Of madness and remorse. I own my crime;—

My horoscope is shadowed o'er with ills,
And I was doomed to be the curse of those
For whom I'd barter heaven. Oh! spurn me not;
For though my veins swell with the Centaur's blood,
I love thee—ah! how dear and dotingly!—
Through all my sin's deformity.

MADAME ST. LEON.

Still hear.
When thy improvidence did set the seal
Of beggary upon us, did I grieve
To lay my body on the scanty straw?—
To slake my thirst at the clear mountain spring,
And diet on a crust, which the poor beggar,—
Nay, e'en his dog,—would have past by unmouthed?
No! I was happy still, for then thy heart
Wore no disguise,—I knew its every pulse.

ST. LEON.

Aye—now my sins sting home! my deeds of youth
Rush o'er my wildered brain, and leave—

MADAME ST. LEON.

Nay more.—
Have I not toiled through twenty lagging years
To smooth the boding frowns of poverty,
And neutralise the wasting powers of want?—
Nor murmuring toiled; because thy heart was mine,
And all its secret impulses of thought.

Sad contrast to the season of my bliss!
Thou shunn'st all free communion, as in days
Gone by, when our united souls seemed one,—
Withdraw'st thy confidence, leaving me now
A rock amid the desert, on whose brow
The spring-shower leaves no freshness. I am lone
And starless in my wanderings.

ST. LEON.

Chide not thus,
For there's a subtle poison in reproof,
When mixed with words of kindness, which excites
Within the heart pangs far more terrible
Than racks do in their wrenchings. Be not sad:—
Shake off this palsying lethargy of grief,
And be this day our jubilee. Behold (*shows gold*)
Our source of happiness!—why this amaze?
What means that quivering lip and bloodless cheek?

MADAME ST. LEON.

My cheeks are blanch'd with dread, and the red streams
Are curdling at my heart! My veins are iced!
Within me stirs a voice that reaches not
The outward ear, but whispers soothsayings
Of dark and terrible import. There's a rack
Of torture to the mind, and mine is on it.

ST. LEON.

Nay, love, why this distress? It frets thee down

To the mere shadow of thy former self.
Recal thine energies, and, if thou lov'st me,
Ring the full chimes of joy! There is no cause
For all this turmoil of unquiet thought.

MADAME ST. LEON.

St. Leon! woe like mine's inscrutable
To thee and all the world! Thou canst not trace
Its throes, not seen but felt—how keenly felt!
The heart can search no bosom but its own.
My grief is no storm-cloud, that fiercely bursts,
And leaves behind a brighter atmosphere;—
'Tis not the querulous changeling of caprice,
A scar upon the surface; but the worm
That burrows to the root, and kills the tree.
Thou art the fosterer of my malady.

ST. LEON.

I?—righteous heaven forbid!

MADAME ST. LEON.

Thou art become
A being wrapt in gloom—an alien
From thy late nobler self. I knew thee once
Rich in thy native goodness; poverty
Had then no frowns to daunt me;—in our toils
I looked not after luxuries; but now (*in a tone of bitterness*)
The thrifty pauper shows his secret treasure,
And bids his wife be blest! (*Enter* GERTRUDE.) What seeks
my child?

GERTRUDE.

E'en now I left a loaded caravan
Close on our threshold, and the mailèd wheels
Groan 'neath their load of costly furniture:—
Costly and rare it seemed. What means this change?

ST. LEON.

Wonder not, Gertrude, 'twas thy sire's command
To change our house's gear, which much too long
Has served us, though but niggardly. Suffice
To tell thee now, that higher views are ours.
We shall not starve, my girl. Nay, look not thus
Incredulous, I am not what I was.

MADAME ST. LEON.

True to the letter.

GERTRUDE.

Wrap not up in doubt
Tidings that ought to quicken to new life
My torpid ecstasies. This altered guise—
This show of wealth, what does it all portend?
Hush my inquiries, father, with the truth,—
I love not mystery.

ST. LEON.

Nor I intrusion.
It is enough that reasons, nothing vague,
Rivet my tongue to silence. But, my child,
Be of good cheer; joys shall be rife around thee!

GERTRUDE.

And must I live to see those promised joys
Shrunk up and blasted by a secret blight,
That shuns the search and eats, unseen, its way,
'Till into one continuous wound it spread,
And mock all arts of cure. Bethink thee, father,
Still be we poor or rich without disguise.

ST. LEON.

Leave casuistry to clerks. It should suffice
That I can make thee happy.

MADAME ST. LEON.

Say'st thou? Ah,
How my rebelling blood rejects the creed!
True happiness is not of hotbed growth,—
No art can force her buds to blossom. She
Thrives not on gold, but prospers in the soul,
Though there the worm of misery riots too!
There lies the thin partition 'twixt our weal
And woe, defying all life's accidents,
'Till death shall hurl the feeble barrier down,
And set the ascendant spirit on its flight
Beyond this pitiless world. (*In a tone of abstraction*) Who'd
grieve to die?

ST. LEON.

Why this? If riches shall be deemed a crime,
Then Solomon was cursed.

MADAME ST. LEON.

There is no vice
In wealth, but as it is the means of guilt.
All mighty changes have a fierce recoil,
And the rude shock may whelm. Look to't, St. Leon,
Beware the precipice, for on the brink
You totter but to fall! [*Exit.*

Enter CHARLES ST. LEON.

CHARLES.

My sire! abroad
Report is loud upon our altered means,
And, as I entered, wondering, I beheld
The busy craftsman, o'er our plaistered floor
Stretching the pictured toil of Persian looms,
As if enchantment had been set at work
To cheat our senses. Father, whence this change?

GERTRUDE *aside to* CHARLES.

See how his brow contracts to sternness: mark
The gathering frown, forbidding further speech.
Press not thy question, brother.

CHARLES.

Gertrude, cease
This vain expostulation. There are tales
Which have their pangs in keeping, but, when told,
The throe at once subsides.

GERTRUDE.

Alas! I dread
The ebullitions of thine ardent spirit!

CHARLES.

Were we not paupers struggling for the means
To keep our starving bodies from the grave?
Have we not moistened in the mountain spring
Our moulded crust, on which the very worms
Have, loathing, died? Has not our hungry flesh
Dried on our bones, 'till the slow-circling blood
Could scarcely find its channel? Why then now
Do I behold this show of better things?
Whence falls this shower of plenty?—Speak, my father.

GERTRUDE, *aside.*

I must retire before the storm grows loud. [*Exit.*

ST. LEON.

My son, thou art an uncourtly questioner.
Observe in silence: rest thee satisfied
That fortune's smiles are on thee.

CHARLES.

I have learned
A child's obedience, but will ne'er be bound
To form withal a recreant compromise
Betwixt mine honour and false duty. Ne'er
Did Virtue skulk to coverts; where she leads
There is no mystery known. This shuns the sight,

Flies to the cavern's gloom, and there, concealed,
Dashes our sweetest joys with bitterness.

ST. LEON.

By my prerogative of parent, boy,
I do forbid this freedom in thy speech.

CHARLES.

My silence were a crime. I dare not heed thee!
Burst from this hell of mystery, and I
Will kiss thy feet and bless thee. Heaven's my witness
How I have honoured thee, how loved, revered!
If I seem hasty or importunate,
Heed well my motive. Speak—in mercy speak!
Tell me thy means of wealth, and how obtained.

ST. LEON.

Stripling, forbear this frantic insolence!
Must I be tutored like a swaddled babe—
My child my pedagogue? Unmannered boy!

CHARLES.

Still must I press thee. What will say the world?
" For twenty years, chilled by the frost of want,
" St. Leon struggled. E'en the beggar shunned
" His door; for Famine's spare and blighted form,
" Half shadow and half substance, stretched therein
" Her squalid limbs. Now, wonderful reverse,
" He springs from want to sudden affluence,
" Without the visible means."

ST. LEON.

St. Leon scorns
The world's surmises. It shall never tax
His honour with a crime would make him blush.

CHARLES.

Show then thine honour spotless, and I'll kneel
And worship thee. My soul is wild with doubt:
I feel the embryo madness in my brain
That will be shortly quickened into life,
If thou deny'st my craving. Is the blood,
That swells my veins, from a polluted source?
Or is my sire still pure? Nay, pause not thus,
But tell me, I implore thee, father, tell me.

ST. LEON.

Rash fool! desist, nor rouse my slumbering ire.
Thus far then learn, that by no crooked means
Did I emerge from poverty to wealth.
Inquire no further, for I dare not give
The secret of that wealth to living man.

CHARLES.

Inglorious subterfuge! and shall I bask
In the corrupting sunshine of thy riches,
Blotched by the leperous taint of calumny,
And tamely leap into the giddy whirl
Of luxury's fetid vortex, while the voice
Of scorn doth shower upon mine ear its gibes?

ST. LEON.

Quit thou my sight, or by the light of heaven!
I'll spurn thee to my feet and curse thee.

CHARLES.

Curse!
I'm armed against its potency; the curse
Which justice would cry fie upon, ne'er found
To heaven its guilty way. One further word—
By Him who rules our destinies, I swear
That if thy secret be not now revealed,
Upon the wide, inhospitable world
I'll seek a happier home.

ST. LEON.

Nay, be not rash.
I dare not tell thee, Charles. Too wild of purpose,
Why wilt thou rush upon uncertain fate,
When all the joys of earth await thy bidding?

CHARLES.

Because I value life but as it yields
The means of triumph to my virtue. Here
Shall peace find no abiding place. Farewell!
I fly because I dare not meet disgrace;
Because I will not hear foul obloquy
Blare from her cankered throat a father's name
Mixed with her poisonous breath. Once more, farewell!
Hereafter, when the flight of time is stilled,

And ages cease to roll, if Heaven so wills,
The sire and son may meet perchance again:
In this world never more! [*Exit.*

ST. LEON (*alone*).

Sad foretaste this
Of what I deemed my bliss! How this dull world
Turns on an axis counter to its weal,
While man, at once its monarch and its slave,
Converts his good to bane. The brightest flower
Withers as soon as plucked; its sweets exhale,
And nothing, save the odours of decay
Stinging the nostril, now remains—a type
Of human destinies. Whatever blooms
Must fade, for it is heaven's primordial law,
And joys above all other earthly things
Are frail and fleeting. Man himself too oft
Blasts them before they're ripe. I have the means
Of limitless fruition; still those means
Seem pregnant with disaster. There's my wife
Droops like a blighted lily to the grave,
Deeming my wealth a curse. My son flies from me;
My daughter shuns me too, while the pale rose
Succeeds the red upon her youthful cheek,
And all the stirring passions seem to ring
The knell of peace within me. What may hap
I know not, but it must be bravely met. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

A village seen in the distance. Villagers appear in groups, variously occupied. BERNARDINE *enters, fantastically dressed.*

BERNARDINE (*alone*).

Troth, I begin to feel my consequence puffing me up like a wind dropsy. I am already swelling from the airy enjoyments of a most delectable anticipation. Growth in dignity portends growth in bulk; the very ties of my jerkin begin to give warning of a speedy secession, and dangle about me like so many diplomatic signals of the triumph of good feeding. Now I've got the care of a well-stored buttery, I feel as light as an omelet and as lofty as a church weathercock. Well, I'm free to admit that a man may rise from rags to purple without a hole in't. What a felicity is a sound pair of hose and an undarned doublet! The predecessors of those in which I now stand, like a pink in a Dresden tea-cup, I've laid by for my master's benefit, for I should be worse than a knave to wrong so kind a master of the least of his property:—time and wear had converted them into a perfect woollen colander. I've now assumed somewhat smarter habiliments than formerly, being promoted to the rank of major-domo in the mansion of the Sieur St. Leon, and am expected to signalise my skill in selecting a few necessary appendages to his household.

Enter JOANNA.

JOANNA.

Save you, Mr. Bernardine, why you are as spruce as a starched nightcap. I declare the devil would hardly know his own. You look like an old mud hovel newly-thatched and whitewashed. (*Turns him playfully round.*)

BERNARDINE.

No, d'ye think so? Dress, you know, must become a man of a certain deportment. Figure, my dear,—without figure a man's no better than a baboon: the tail's the only difference betwixt them. But a portly carriage, girl, is like candlelight to beauty: it sets off the outward man. Eh? what say'st thou? How does my leg become a silk stocking?

JOANNA.

Marvellously well—as a pudding becomes its cloth. Stick you in a hedge, and where's the crow would fly over it. What a rare ghost you'd make in a pantomime.

BERNARDINE.

Shut that little mustard-pot, or I'll make my lips its stopper. I've a secret for thee, girl?

JOANNA.

Out with it then. When there's a secret in the way, my curiosity gallops after it like a charger after a trumpet.

BERNARDINE.

Do you know, then, that my master has got hold of

Fortunatus's purse, and can't find the bottom on't. No more barley meal and cheese-parings. I shall henceforward have a toasted kidney, a poached egg, or a broiled sweetbread, every morning before I rise. After dinner I shall take my dram, and never more go to bed with a stomach like a huge bubble full of nothing but air. I hate this cameleon diet; 'tis a sad enemy to a wholesome digestion. I shall no longer lie nude o' nights, but have my ears regaled with the most dulcet of all sweet sounds—the composing creak of a four-post bedstead upon casters. Don't you envy me, ye smirking baggage—eh?

JOANNA.

Four posts for a blockhead! three then must be supernumeraries, since there's many a better head than thine that can only boast of one. For my part, I've a natural antipathy to a post for my bedfellow.

BERNARDINE.

Out, gipsy; thou'rt as frisky as a grasshopper. Ah! thou know'st that after my stomach—and what's a man without his stomach?—I love thee better than—than—why I prefer thee to an afternoon's nap or a second luncheon. Betwixt thee and a full tankard I should be like the ass in the fable—'twould puzzle me which to choose. D'ye laugh, wench? 'tis true, upon my veracity. You may credit me, that whenever I've made a good supper (and I've had but short practice at that, though practice is a quick perfectioner) I'm sure to dream of thee, malapert.

JOANNA.

Thank ye kindly, Mr. Bernardine. I dreamed of you too the other night, but thought I saw a great ugly tail sticking out between the skirts of your coat, and you looked so like Old Harry—you know Old Harry? that's the Devil's Christian name among his familiars—that I awoke dripping to my finger's ends, and all through terror at seeing you look so frightful.

BERNARDINE.

That was a devilish dream, else he, with that formidable appendage of tail thou speak'st of, could never have cut such a figure in't. (*She smiles.*) Ah! my sweet prattler, I love to hear thee; thou gibest better than the king's fool. I'll match thee against any magpie in Christendom. There's more music in thy woman's mag than in the best hurdy-gurdy that ever squeaked under the finger of a ragged troubadour. Come near me, hussy,—thou'rt a very rose-bud to my senses; come, I say, come, let me be thy bee.

JOANNA.

The bee tastes of every flower, and remains constant to none; I'm sure there's no such fickleness in thee. Thou'rt not bright enough for a wasp; thou shalt therefore be my drone, for I never can dread thy sting.

BERNARDINE.

Thou'rt as tart as a quince, though the burgundy grape hasn't half thy flavour; the very sight of thee well nigh

intoxicates. But come thou—Oh! for a comparison to become thee!—thou diamond set in copper! Tell me, when shall we be married?

JOANNA.

Time enough yet. We'll be married before I shrivel.

BERNARDINE.

Shrivel! odds bobs, don't talk of shrivelling; it makes my skin flap like an empty bag in the wind. If I don't have thee whilst thou'rt plump and rosy, I shall make up my mind to die a bachelor; I have no ambition to see thy jaws shake like a rattle-trap on a cherry-tree. If 'tis thy will to live a virgin until thy body is about to be wedded to the worms, I shall cry thee mercy and retreat. Think again, girl.

JOANNA.

How wilt thou maintain me if I marry thee? Thy gaberdine is too scant to serve for family clothing. Remember when thou hast a wife, there will be two or more carcases to cover, and two or more mouths to feed. How wouldst thou manage, eh?

BERNARDINE.

Listen! My master has taken a lease of Aladdin's cave, with all its precious commodities. He allows me, now, a most creditable salary, so that I can very well afford to raise myself to the enviable dignity of a married man. If thou art willing, I'll engage thee as abigail to my lady.

JOANNA.

I'm quite agreeable, provided I've good perquisites—for a place without perquisites is like porridge without an onion. But how comes thy master so rich? Why he was lately as poor as a Franciscan, and looked as lean as a nit upon a cast hair.

BERNARDINE.

Aye, thereby hangs a tale. Thine ear, wench. Thou must know that my master dabbles in the black art.

JOANNA.

No!

BERNARDINE.

As sure as thou'rt a sinner.

JOANNA.

Nay—hold thy calf's tongue; I'm no sinner.

BERNARDINE.

Well, then, as sure as thou'rt beloved by an honest man. My master often goes into a dark hole behind his house, where he lets off a parcel of squibs and crackers; and sometimes there's such a plaguy hubbub within, that all the owls skurry out of their holes with affright, and the very crickets stop in the midst of their song.

JOANNA.

Santa Maria! what a strange man!

BERNARDINE.

Aye, and one day, if you'll believe me, I saw that grand

monopoliser of fire and brimstone, old Beelzebub, as large as if he'd all the nine lives of a cat. I saw him, I tell thee, under the villanous disguise of a huge black poodle, with fangs like so many sickles, and a barb at the end of his tail, like a whaler's harpoon:—nay, don't grin, wench; I vow I saw him, as plain as you may see an owl in the twilight, bolt out of this same dismal private apartment, that I told thee of, and jump bounce into a well that has no bottom, but runs—so my master tells me, and he is an oracle in these matters—sheer through the earth, like a skewer through a bullock's heart, and is, to a dead certainty, one of the unknown sources of the Nile, the Senegal, or the Ganges. But, bless me, I've got to the end of my gossip, and now for my vocation. (*Turns to villagers.*) Come, my lads and lasses, come along with me, and I'll soon find employment for ye. (*Villagers shout.*)

VILLAGERS.

The Sieur St. Leon for ever! Hurra boys! let's follow Mr. Bernardine. [*Exit* BERNARDINE; *Villagers follow.*

Enter FRANCISCO *and* PEREZ.

FRANCISCO TO JOANNA.

I think, girl, thou seem'st upon mighty good terms with that new-fangled coxcomb, who appears to have stolen some mountebank's livery, it hangs about him so villanously. No Punch's doublet was ever half so fantastical.

JOANNA.

La! Francisco, don't be jealous of Bernardine; he's as harmless a poor reptile as ever was spawn'd.

FRANCISCO.

Jealous? Dos't think the rank oil that hangs about thee, can feed the fires of jealousy?—know better, wench. Don't let thy vanity outrun thy discretion.

PEREZ.

Nay, give the lass good words. Thou snarlest like an old mongrel over a stolen bone.

JOANNA.

Aye, I've been hand and glove with him when I might have pick'd from his betters. I've given him no cause to take on so. His is a dastard spirit to say the best on't; for I'm sure no true man would bully an honest woman.

FRANCISCO.

Honest? the very brass in thy face reddens to hear thee thus belie thyself. There's about as much honesty in thee as there's juice in a nut-shell. Beshrew thee for a sorry trumpeter! Thou art the addle egg of the nest: the best part of thee's thy outside. Thou art only fit to cast at a thief.

JOANNA.

Then that accounts for my hitting thee. I'm not so addle, but I should become a mighty deal worse from pairing with thy carrion.

PEREZ.

By my troth, Francisco, the girl's more than a match for thee. But tell me, thou little tongue-trotter, what thou and that ape's counterfeit were so cozy about?

JOANNA.

We were talking upon business.

FRANCISCO.

I'll be sworn for thee.

PEREZ.

Why thou seem'st mightily hipp'd at the girl's talking with a scarecrow.

FRANCISCO.

Faith not I. 'Tis true she's in pretty good trim to scare, but I'll take care she shall never find me her crow.

JOANNA.

An I did, I should find a most singular novelty—an owl in black feathers.

PEREZ.

Give up, man, or she'll tattoo thee worse than a Timbuctoo savage; she'll crimp thee like a cod-fish. Come, tell me, wench, what thou and the parish fool were gossiping about just now. There can be no secret between an ass and a wise woman.

JOANNA.

If you must know, he has hired me as abigail to his lady.

PEREZ.

Oh! the joke's stale, I've no appetite for't. She hasn't wardrobe enough to fill a bandbox. Her cast off apparel would hardly make thee tinder. She knows the hue of no money but copper, and even that she isn't over troubled with counting. Thou wouldst have but a starving place on't, I reckon.

JOANNA.

What a sapient head thine is for a block! She might feed upon gold if she knew how to digest it. Her husband has been entering into partnership with old Lucifer, and is in a very fair way of soon becoming head of the firm.

PEREZ.

Come, come—no tricks upon travellers—that won't do. Set a thief to catch a thief, my dear.

FRANCISCO (*aside*).

Her information will be useful. I always hated this Bernardine, and may soon get him and his master snugly housed within the walls of our Holy Inquisition.

JOANNA.

Well then, thus it is. St. Leon counts his gold by the sack. He often goes into a dismal old dungeon at the back of his house, where he, and the smutty roaster of heretic souls, kick up such a clatter, that the very crickets become as mute as stockfish, and the toads swell with fright till they burst. During this rake-helly riot, they let off a parcel of

squibs and crackers, and perform so many wonderful tricks of legerdemain, so Bernardine tells me, that he doesn't know which is the cleverest, his master or his master's master, the present Lord Paramount of the world below. Now you have it all in a breath, and so good bye. [*Exit hastily.*

PEREZ.

Well, Francisco, what think ye?

FRANCISCO.

We must watch, Perez—we must watch. The masters of our holy inquisition shall never have to say of me, that I'm worth less than my hire.

PEREZ.

By the mass! I think we're a couple of as honest spies as ever Pope's delegate pitch'd upon for a knave's office.

FRANCISCO.

To our vocation. The bird once caged, and our purses will feel no lack of piastres. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

An apartment in ST. LEON'S *house, richly furnished.*
GERTRUDE *enters.*

GERTRUDE (*alone*).

How the fierce rush of doubts o'erwhelms my soul,
And leaves it, like a dark November sky,

Without one ray to cheer! Alas! this wealth
Is but the glare of splendid miseries—
The fruit that offers honey to the lips,
But ashes to the taste. So lately ours,
It has stuffed more of wormwood in the heart
Than a whole life of unrequited want.
Charles, the companion of my infant years,
Has left his home for ever, and the eye
Of wonder gapes at the prodigious tale
Of my sire's riches.

Enter Don Felix.

DON FELIX.

Hah! sweet girl, well met.
What kind magician here has cast his spells
And turned to costly, what the niggard hand
Of want so lately furnished? Make me glad
With the brief tidings of your altered fortunes.

GERTRUDE.

I lack the power to tell thee.

DON FELIX.

Strange.

GERTRUDE.

In sooth
'Tis strange, but not more strange than true. Alas!
This rare possession of such mighty means

Is like the plague-spot in the gorgeous stuffs
Sent by the Turk, or from the hot Levant,
To these more temperate shores, which, while it lurks
Within the rarest fabrics of Cashmere,
Scatters around it doom. My cup of life
Now sparkles o'er the brim and mocks at woe,
But bitters—loathsome bitters—lurk within it.
To me 'tis drugged with wretchedness. My sun
Of peace is set, and the dark chilling night
Of sadness closes round me. Ill betides
Our altered fortune, Felix, for my father
Is strangely altered, too.

DON FELIX.

Impossible!

GERTRUDE.

True, at his bidding plenty's horn o'erflows,
And runs to waste, but how to solve the problem,
By what strange means he warped her to his will,
I know not, nor can guess.

DON FELIX.

Nay, droop not thus—
Thy fears should never thus o'erlay thy hopes.
I'll seek thy father, and expect, ere long,
To be the messenger of joyful tidings.

GERTRUDE.

Urge no rash questions, Felix; 'twere not wise,

Lest, while his heart is chafed to bitterness,
He should incense thee by some stern rebuke.
But see, he comes.—I must retire. Farewell. [*Exit.*

Enter ST. LEON.

DON FELIX.

Well met, St. Leon! I congratulate
Your change of circumstance.

ST. LEON.

Accept my thanks
In payment for your ready courtesy.

DON FELIX.

St. Leon, to my friendship's privilege
I now appeal in favour of my right
To share thy confidence. Thy wealth 's the theme
Of universal wonder, and the tongue
Of rumour sets the rustic crowd agape
With uncouth fictions, which impeach thy known
And tried integrity. This must not be.
Make me the willing messenger of truth,
That I may still those full-blown calumnies
Which, unrebutted now, load the pure air.

ST. LEON.

I give no heed to vulgar colloquies,
Nor lend to rumour's fantasies an ear.
Point where opinion may, I shall not strive

To silence slanders ignorantly breathed
From the tongues of a village rabble.

DON FELIX.

Nay—
Be not thus hasty in a rash resolve.
Steal not to corners where the gaze of men
May follow thee with whispers. Stand erect
In thine own innocence, and drop the mask
That hides it. To the rabble's greedy ear
Trumpet the mighty secret of thy means,
And save thy honour from the taunts of scorn.

ST. LEON.

Why, let the world scorn on, and I can smile
Defiance at its malice. I have lived
Too long to tremble at an idle threat,
Or knock the knee when calumny's abroad.
And shall I yield the privilege to clowns
To try my honour at their rigid bar,
And plead my cause before them. Pardon me,
If strange appear my humour; but I deem
This busy and officious questioning
Intrusive, though in friendship. I'm not bound
To ope my inward heart beyond my will;
And, till that will direct me otherwise,
The secret of my wealth remains untold. [*Exit.*

DON FELIX (*alone*).

This looks not well. If honestly he paved
The way to opulence, it were his pride
To show his means of wealth. If methods vile
Were practised, then this mystery befriends him.
A baneful secret lurks beneath his gold
Which the broad light may show too hideously. [*Exit.*

SCENE V.

The outside of ST. LEON'S *grotto.* PEREZ *and* FRANCISCO *enter.*

FRANCISCO.

I dare say he's at work by this time: do you, Perez, go and take a peep at him.

PEREZ (*going to the entrance of the grotto*).

Ho, ho! there he sits, as busy as any rascal of his calling. His eyes glare like a rabid wolf's in his lair; guilt is branded upon his audacious forehead; the very sight of him's a distemper. How his bellows are at work!—now he's stirring something about in a chafing-dish;—now a tremendous blue flame arises.—Holy St. Michael! how horrible he looks! now—(*At this moment an explosion is heard from the*

interior of the grotto. PEREZ *reels back a few paces, and falls to the ground.*)

FRANCISCO.

Blessed Virgin! what was that?

BERNARDINE *rushes in from the grotto.*

BERNARDINE.

Gramercy, what a popgun! I've got such a tingling in my ears, and such a villanous whizzing in my head, that I hardly know if I'm not running with my heels uppermost. (*sees Francisco*). Boddikins, Signor Francisco, are you here, or are you not? for I haven't an eye or an ear about me that can well be trusted. But if you really are, Signor Francisco, may I be so bold as to ask—pardon me—but pray, how came you here?

FRANCISCO (*surlily*).

I came in search of an owl's nest, but it seems I've only found one of the old birds.

BERNARDINE.

And did nothing ever suggest to thee that an owl can any day feather a jackdaw?

FRANCISCO (*aside*).

I must not draw out this rogue's foul humours (*aloud*). Thou'rt a rare wag, honest Bernardine; but as Perez and I were accidentally passing this way homewards, we heard such a clatter within there (*pointing to the grotto*).

PEREZ (*rising*).

Aye, thunder's a whisper to it. I feel as if I hadn't a drop of blood within me as big as a pippin. What, saving the Pope's presence, was that old conjuror about?

(BERNARDINE *beckons to both significantly. They place themselves on each side of him.*)

BERNARDINE.

Do you know that was one of my master's crackers. Oh! bless you, he often amuses himself so. 'Twas a bouncer, wasn't it? I had hid myself, just to take a peep at what was going on, and I 'm sure I saw him and Mr. Beelzebub cheek by jowl, for—

(ST. LEON *enters, his face cut and bleeding; all gaze upon him in alarm.* BERNARDINE *crosses himself.*)

ST. LEON (*to* BERNARDINE).

Driveller! what urg'd thee like a thief to steal
Upon my privacy, and mar my studies?

BERNARDINE.

I only just popped in, good master of mine, to look after some stuff to poison the rats; for since our larder has savoured of a better garnish, they've returned to their old quarters. And when I saw your respected self come in, looking as grave as the ghost of a cardinal, I hid myself among the gallipots, and should have stuck there, as mute as a death's head over an apothecary's shop, if I hadn't

been bolted out of my hiding-place by the roar of that outrageous squib with such a tingling bang in its tail.

ST. LEON.

Fool! 'twas the bursting of a crucible
That caused thy coward fears. Another time
Forbear such impudent intrusion. Hence,
And for the next offence thine ears shall answer.

BERNARDINE.

Lackaday! they tingle yet as if they'd been twitched by a most pertinent finger and thumb.

[*Exit*, ST. LEON *following*.

FRANCISCO.

Let us to the village, and stir up the peasants; they suspect him already to be a conjuror; we'll now go and do our best to confirm their suspicions.

PEREZ.

Aye, his soul's mortgaged, as sure as we're for heaven.

[*Exeunt*.

DON FELIX *enters, equipped for travelling, with a pair of pistols in his girdle.*

DON FELIX, *alone.*

Within these walls are treasured all my hopes,
But a dark destiny, that dims their lustre,
Hangs, like a mildew, o'er them. I am doomed
To feel love lead me to his rosy shrine,

Whose incense, like a rainbow, steeps the soul
In hues of holy bliss; but from the goal
Where hope had glimmered, like a rising star,
Stern honour drags me with imperious brow,
And frowns upon my weakness. 'Tis resolved!
I dare not pause!—yes, Gertrude, I must fly,
Whilst thou, within a tainted atmosphere,
Breathest the noxious element. Farewell!
Far from thee be my course, though in my prayers
Thy name shall rise to heaven.

BERNARDINE *enters from the village, his dress much disordered, his face blotched with mud.*

BERNARDINE.

If I haven't been set upon like a tail-piped cur at a wake, or a mangy cat in a conventicle. The rattling of my ribs might have been heard by the very stone martyrs that grin so canonically over the porch of the village church. (*Sees* DON FELIX.) I humbly crave your pardon, signor, but I didn't see you.

DON FELIX.

What has befallen thee, honest Bernardine?
Thou seem'st disordered,—why appear'st thou thus?

BERNARDINE.

For no other earthly reason than because I can't help it.

I was set upon in the village as if I had been a polecat. The moment I appeared the churls raised a cry of "there goes the wizard's dog," and with that they began to maul and belabour me after such a summary fashion, that I was fain to make the best of my running, or should have left myself nothing better than a handsome corpse among 'em. But you are not going to leave us in good earnest, signor, are you?

DON FELIX.

I am, good fellow, and that quickly too.
Thy master has grown rich, and, heaven knows why,
But he was more esteemed in poverty
Than now, though with the spirit of a prince,
He doles his wealth out largely. I am one
Who can no longer call myself his friend,
While thus he shrouds his deeds in mystery.

BERNARDINE.

And so because the father's table is a little better garnished than formerly, you leave the daughter in the lurch, and run away, as if the mere sight of plenty had given you a surfeit. Perhaps you would rather have seen her thrive on warm water broth, without a leek to flavour it, or a raw onion sliced upon a crust that had lived a couple of Saturdays. Pardon me, signor, I have nothing to say against your logic, it may be of the very best, but I am

sure, nevertheless, that it has jostled your brains out of their proper receptacles, and foisted its noisy good-for-nothing self into the cavities.

DON FELIX.

Go to, thou waggish knave; my mind's made up.
To Gertrude bear my love and, with it, this—(*gives a letter*)
It will account for my abrupt departure.
Be careful of thy trust and speed thee well.

BERNARDINE.

How well I shall speed is another matter. I am sure I have sped faster to-day than I expect ever again to do, unless a purse be the reward of my labour. (*A shout heard.*) As I hope to be married, here come, helter skelter, the dogs that swore vengeance against my master's private laboratory, and they are preparing, I dare say, to blow it up like an old hornet's nest. How the phials will rattle! Oh! the gallipots, the gallipots!

(DON FELIX *draws a brace of pistols from his girdle, and gives one to* BERNARDINE.)

DON FELIX.

Stand firm and shrink not; should the churls approach
To force an entrance here, 'tis at their peril.
If needful, fire, thy duty may require it. (*Shouts approach.*)

BERNARDINE.

I don't much fancy this pistolling. I'm but an indifferent

hand at fire arms; but who ever saw Bernardine flinch when his kind master was in jeopardy?

(*He puts himself into an attitude of defence. A posse of Villagers enter, headed by* FRANCISCO *and* PEREZ, *and attempt to force their way into the grotto. They are opposed by* DON FELIX *and* BERNARDINE, *who at length fire.* PEREZ *falls. Villagers run off tumultuously. The scene closes.*)

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

THE SCENE IN AND NEAR MADRID.

SCENE I.

As in Scene 4th, Act 1st.

Enter ST. LEON, *and* MADAME ST. LEON.

MADAME ST. LEON.

These are but sorry first fruits of our wealth!
If only such shall be matured and plucked
Would that grim want again, in sackcloth cased,
Did cramp our bones! Look how thy tawdry gold
Begins to mock thee! Thou'rt already cursed
In thy possession. Out upon this dross,
That only casts a splendour over ruin!
Thy life's in jeopardy. The rabble threat,
And in their hostile mood collect their strength
For desperate purpose. Where this wrath may end
Is now no more a problem.

ST. LEON.

Fear them not.
The broil is hushed. 'Twas but the sudden blaze
Of mingling spirits put into ferment

By indiscreet exposure. Soon the calm
Of quiet will return, when I extend
The hand of bounty to these rioters.
Even the rabid tiger may be won;
Fling him a carcase and his ire is staunched.
Thus gold will win a churl, and sops a cur.

MADAME ST. LEON.

Nay, even curs will tear the hand that feeds them.
Has not a life been sacrificed? I fear
There 's blood upon thy head, and o'er thee glares
The hideous form of peril.

ST. LEON.

Be composed,
Nor vex thy spirit with distempered doubts.
Fret not thyself with fantasies which, through
The microscopic medium of thy thoughts,
Present small things immensely magnified.
The villain's blood paid but the rigid dues
Of his own rashness.

MADAME ST. LEON.

Will the world say thus?
No! prejudice has been too much thy foe!
She to the crowd has marked thee out a man
Of superhuman powers; with cavern'd gnomes
A leaguer, who, when hyperborean winds
Strike the eternal mountain's gelid scalp,

And dun fogs blink the moon, steal from their caves
Beneath the earthquake, and to night's mute ear
Tune their infernal spells. All eyes behold
With hate the fancied wizard, and all hearts
Throb in strange terror when they gaze upon thee.

ST. LEON.

Granted.

MADAME ST. LEON.

Dare not then their mighty malice.
Though they be reptiles of the basest blood
They 're too well fanged to be thus closely braved,
And oft the meaner has the direr sting.
Come not within the province of their spleen,
But fly to some far land, where bland repose
Shall welcome thee with smiles, where the rude taunt
May never reach thee, nor suspicion's leer
Herald her blinded vengeance.

ST. LEON.

Never!—fly?
Skulk like a mousing owl from the fair sun,
As if I fear'd to look upon his beams?
Shall I, by coward flight from a vile mob
Of village boors, confess myself a knave?
Shall I thus tacitly confirm the tales
Which fancy, in her hot and wanton mood,
Has raised to my disparagement? Secure

In conscious innocence, I waste no thonghts
On distant perils.

Enter GERTRUDE.

GERTRUDE.

Father! you 're betrayed.
Two men in sable stole demand your person.
They come commissioned, so their words import,
From that drear sepulchre of living men,
The Holy Inquisition.

ST. LEON.

Bid them enter.

MADAME ST. LEON.

Nay, pause upon the threshold of thy doom!
Thou standest now upon the verge of fate:
Take not the fatal plunge, lest in the gulf
Destruction swallow thee.

ST. LEON.

I fear it not.

MADAME ST. LEON.

But rashness is no safeguard against peril.

ST. LEON.

Is coward caution a security?

MADAME ST. LEON.

When danger is forestall'd.

GERTRUDE.

Be warn'd, my sire :—
List, I implore thee, to my suppliant voice
That adds its feeble argument to stay thee.
Why pluck the tawny lion by the beard
When thou canst turn thee from the monster's clutch ?
Tarry not.—Oh ! in mercy to your child—
Your wife and children—fly !

ST. LEON.

Why should I spurn
The scrutiny that now attends my fame ?
I shall return by much the purer man
After the purgings which my name shall bear
Before that high tribunal.

MADAME ST. LEON.

Madly urg'd !
When did those priestly judges, on whose brows
Are writ those awful characters of death
Which shook the proud Chaldean on his throne,
Feel pity's glow excite their sluggish blood ?
When did those demons, in the saintly garb
Of heaven's vicegerents, e'er dispense its mercy ?
This visit is portentous,—'tis the brief
But sure presage of peril.

ST. LEON.

Think'st thou ? No !

It is the season of my triumph now:
And wouldst thou have me cowardly elude
The golden opportunity, and leave
A stain upon me, which the stream of time,
Swelled by past generations since the flood,
Should ne'er wash out? a canker that should taint
The blood of all my house, and send it down
A pest to future ages? Nay, forbear
Thus to impel me headlong on disgrace.

Two OFFICERS *of the* INQUISITION *enter.*

OFFICER (*to* ST. LEON).

Thou art accused of grave delinquencies
Against our spiritual mother;—more than this,
Some lighter malversations swell the charge,
Now laid before the guardians of our church,
Against thy person. Thou 'rt our prisoner.

ST. LEON.

I shall attend ye. One who knows no guilt
Can have no quickened pulse to waste on fear.
Retire, I'll follow straight.

OFFICER.

Use no delay;
Our time is short, our orders peremptory.

[*Exeunt* OFFICERS.

ST. LEON.

What should I dread?

MADAME ST. LEON.

A dungeon!

GERTRUDE.

Torture!

MADAME ST. LEON.

Death!

ST. LEON.

Nay, fear it not. Ye objects that my soul
Has so long doated on, why droop ye thus?
Ere the pale moon, now in her sickly wane,
Again hangs out her crescent in the skies
To shame the blinking stars, your hearts shall leap
'Gainst mine, responsive to the voice of welcome.—
I pledge my life upon my safe return.

MADAME ST. LEON.

Oh! could I see thee but redeem that pledge
I then were well content. Thy rash belief
Denies me this;—yet why so madly launch
Upon the rough and rayless tide of danger,
Without a guide to bring thee through the storm?
The rock lurks nigh thee, and methinks I hear
E'en now the angry breakers chafe and roar
To warn thee from the peril.

GERTRUDE.

Hear, my sire
Turn not a heedless ear unto our prayers:
Take counsel, I implore thee;—why delay?
My heart will break to leave thee to a dungeon

MADAME ST. LEON.

If thou wilt go, St. Leon, fare thee well!
I will no longer harass thee with plaints
But let my spirit brood o'er its own pangs
In solitary suffering.

ST. LEON.

Farewell!—(*embraces both, and exit*).

MADAME ST. LEON.

Why this is as it should be! still I strain
Tow'rds the near climax of my wretchedness,
And that once gained, the pang will soon be o'er
That shall subvert this tenement of flesh
Where the soul lingers, sore against its will,
And longs for liberty.

GERTRUDE.

Great God of mercy!
Look down upon our tribulations! pour not
The vial of thy wrath upon us! Turn
The storm that gathers o'er us from our dwelling.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

As in Scene III. Act I.

Enter FRANCISCO *and* JOANNA.

JOANNA.

Do you know, Francisco, that they've taken poor Bernardine and his master off to the Inquisition? And Madam and young Miss are in such a taking about 'em you can't think.

FRANCISCO.

And they'll have good lodgings for one while. Go and pray for them, girl, for their fat will feed the fire of the next *auto da fè*. They'll have a warm passage to the next world.

JOANNA.

They won't really be burned, will they?

FRANCISCO.

Aye, as sure as thou'lt burn, when the devil claims thee. Dost thou think the soul of poor Perez shall be left to roast in purgatory, without the consolation of having his murderers roasted in this world?

JOANNA.

Well, but he began first, you know. If Bernardine had not given him a quietus, he'd have knocked poor Bernardine on

the head; and I'm sure 'tis too hollow to be proof against a cudgel!

FRANCISCO.

And the villain would have got but his due. We'll have the house about their ears ere another moon be past.

JOANNA.

Don't be such a surly madcap. What have these honest people done to make thee so rancorous against them?

FRANCISCO.

Honest, say'st thou? As honest as a thief in a church, or a jew out of his own synagogue! I've employment still on their account, and so—good-bye! [*Exit.*

JOANNA (*alone*).

I'm sure hemp never throttled a purer rogue. He's more cunning and rabid than a starved jackal. No wolf ever whelp'd a fouler cub. Though we've been cronies—and, perhaps I only took up with him for want of a better—I'll take care that he and I never make a deuce of trumps. I'd as lief marry Pope Joan or a mad cardinal. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

A dungeon in the Inquisition. ST. LEON *discovered seated on a rude bench, in an attitude of mental absorption.* BERNARDINE *is seen chained to a wall on the opposite side.*

BERNARDINE.

A pretty hobble this for a gentleman and his honest domestic to find themselves in, after such a taste as we've recently had of Fortune's confectionary! I hope she's not now coming to us in the character of a miss; for she always looks anything but agreeable under the similitude of a maid. Suppose she should be going to prove a trickster, and only tickled us with sweets by way of a prelude to choking us with bitters. I'll forswear all homage to such a gingerbread divinity, if I'm to have no better reward for my fealty. A plague upon these martyr-making gentry, who fatten on the Pope's bread, or the State's, for the better starving of heretics! what can they think of themselves for pinning me against a cold wall, where even a slug would catch a catarrh. I trust they don't intend to thumb-screw us! The very thought's an ague. Bless me! here comes that grim-looking fellow, with his huge key, to call us to a breakfast of aches and twinges. The sight of his sulphur

visage, a perfect index to the book of martyrs, makes my head spin round like a whirligig.

Enter a GAOLER.

ST. LEON.

Whence this intrusion? Art thou come to free
The captive from his cell? (*The* GAOLER *makes no answer.*)
Hast thou no voice
To tell the purport of thy visit?—Speak!

(*The* GAOLER *goes to* BERNARDINE, *unlocks his chains, then beckons to him and* ST. LEON *to follow, continuing the whole time silent.*)

BERNARDINE.

Now for a cold sweat without physic. Gramercy! I shouldn't wonder if this were to be the prelude to a family mourning. The very look of that inquisitorial mute is a perpetual memento mori.

(ST. LEON *and* BERNARDINE *go off, followed by the* GAOLER.)

SCENE IV.

The trial-chamber of the Inquisition. On an elevated seat in the centre appears the Master of the Inquisition, arrayed in his robes of office. On either side are seated various officers of the holy body. ST. LEON *and* BERNARDINE *are ushered in by the* GAOLER.

MASTER (*to* ST. LEON).

Prisoner, stand forth! Thou'rt charged with sundry crimes
Against our mother church.

ST. LEON.

Let them be named:
I shrink not from the charges. Innocence
Knowing no guilt, can fear no punishment.

MASTER.

True; punishment ne'er falls on innocence
Under our rule: we war but with the guilty.

ST. LEON.

Then I'm secure. Propound your questions, priest,
I stand upon my innocence:—proceed.

MASTER.

Subdue this bearing, prisoner. 'Tis too bold
For thy condition here: no empty boast

Of innocence can quench the glare of guilt.
Assertion carries not the force of proof;
'Tis but a feeble barrier 'gainst conviction.

ST. LEON.

I rest not on assertion:—prove against me.
If proof be wanting, why am I arraigned?

MASTER.

This lofty tone will never set thee free.
Hurl thy defiance at the raging storm;—
Thou may'st as well, as strive, with vaunting tongue,
To hush the voice of justice. Urge thy plea
With that mild cadence which proclaims respect.

ST. LEON.

Will the tame crouching of a dastard soul
Here plead in my behalf? Father, I scorn
An advocate so vile! My slanderers,
Why do they not come forth, and state my crime?
Why this delay? Now try me, or acquit.
You talk of justice;—talk not on't, but give.

MASTER.

It shall suffice, thou'rt secretly arraign'd
Of numerous obliquities; by whom
It boots not me to tell, nor thee to know.
Thou standest here a criminal. Prepare
To answer, with due reverence, the count
That heads the catalogue of thy misdeeds.

First, then, a late retainer of our body
Has by thy means been butchered. This alone
Is a most crying sin, and supplicates
An exemplary chastisement.

ST. LEON.

I plead
To this charge guilty, though no hand of mine
Sent him to his account. He gain'd the meed
Of his own rashness:—'twas too well deserv'd.
The wretched man, urged on by wanton spleen,
Attacked my house, as a gaunt wolf the fold,
Denouncing death; and whilst he fiercely strove
To cast destruction upon other heads
'Twas hurled upon his own.

MASTER.

His act was just.
He had received our sanction, and he fell,—
Heaven rest his soul!—a martyr to his duty.
Thy practices had fixed a mark upon thee
As a liege minister of hell. Thy hours
Are passed in loneliness. Thy sunken eye
Bespeaks the study of some dire arcana,
The fruits of necromancy.

ST. LEON.

Can I hear
Such vague assumptions of my guilt, and those

Ta'en up upon the bald and rash surmise
Of a few clowns—those village oracles,
Whose fantasies so oft outstrip their sense
That reason grows bewildered;—can I hear
From priestly lips such imputations foul,
Which are beside all proof, nor blush to mark
The weakness that can credit them? Make good
One single charge that implicates my honour,
And I'm content to yield me to your rack.

MASTER.

From a mere beggar art thou not become
A man of mighty means—those means a secret?
Where lie those mines of gold whence thou prepar'st
Thy countless ingots? Where's thy treasure-house,
To which the Pope's exchequer were a ward
Of all but worthless baubles? Why withdraw
From the society of men and skulk
To gloomy caverns, where, shut out from sight,
Suspicion follows thee with greedy eye,
And tracks thee in thy infamy. This asks
Our strictest scrutiny. Speak to the truth;
For, if thy answers prove equivocal,
Be on thy head the punishment of sin!

BERNARDINE (*aside*).

Now 'tis my turn to put in a word, or there'll soon be an ecclesiastical bonfire. (*Loud.*) I assure your reverence that

my master is no more guilty than his holiness, and that's more than I should dare to say of him an he were a loon. I'd rather kick than praise him, but that he's more entitled to a reward than to a penalty. That uncourteous retainer of your reverence was sadly behind his manners, and if I hadn't ventilated his brains with a leaden borer, we might have all got sadly singed, to the great detriment of our complexions; and, please your reverence, burning ought to be only for the next world.

MASTER.

What base-born caitiff boldly thus presumes
To interrupt our question?

ST. LEON.

My wealth
Is not the meed of guilt. I dare the world
To prove that I have used unlawful means
To lift me with the noblest of this land.
That I am honest who will dare gainsay?
Can no man hold a secret, but his name
Must bear the brand of contumely?

MASTER.

Aye,
This is equivocation's cunning cant,
And speaks the criminal.

ST. LEON.

What man shall prove

His innocence, when the brow-beating judge
Deep skilled in cavil, shuns the light of truth,
And hoodwinks justice? Briefly then I answer,
That never will I breathe to living man
The secret of my riches.

MASTER.

Bravely said!
Rare resolution for a man of sin!
Murder, or robbery, or the base means
That furnish sharpers with their daily bread,
Are motives that might well make secrecy
To thee a brave necessity. Once more,
Wilt thou confess?

ST. LEON.

I scorn to answer this.
Try all your wrenching racks upon my frame,
And you shall witness how I can endure
The inflictions of your tyranny.

MASTER.

Bear hence
The criminal; convey him to his cell,
And on the morrow pass him through the ordeal.

[*Exit* ST. LEON *with* GAOLER.

BERNARDINE.

Now for my turn. I expect to have my skin stretch'd upon a drum at least, or to have some new missal bound in't instead of morocco.

MASTER (*to* BERNARDINE).

Thou may'st go free, the master answers here
For the domestic's deeds; but once again
Set thy unhallow'd foot within these walls,
And other doom shall visit thee. Depart,
And may the Lord have mercy on thy soul!

BERNARDINE.

Your reverence is most graciously condescending. How kind in your reverence to visit the sins of the servant upon the master. A most equitable Christianity! I shall be your reverence's most obedient slave. Another visit here will be the last of my ambition. Though this may be a very proper sort of asylum, I dare say, for rogues and vagabonds—of which, saving your presence, I am none—'tis plaguily disagreeable to a new comer. I hope the next man that dies by my pistolling may get me a second introduction to your reverence. (*Aside.*) And I can only go one step further by wishing myself at once where there's neither daylight nor candlelight, and nothing but evil company.

MASTER (*descending from the presidential chair*).

Now we'll to mass, and pray for the lost souls
Of our misguided prisoners.

OFFICERS.

Amen! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

As in Scene I. Act II.

Enter GERTRUDE *and* JOANNA.

GERTRUDE.

Where's now the voice of cheering? Charles no more
Breathes on mine ear that welcome which was wont
To make the lagging hours run smoothly on,
When penury set thick with jagged thorns
The path before us. Then those thorns were pointless;
Content had clipp'd them, and they harm'd us not.
But now, alas! I seem to tread on adders,
And ev'ry step am stung. A brother lost!
Don Felix shuns my presence, and these eyes
Seek friendship's form in vain. No kindred ear
Meets my complainings; no responsive heart
Answers the pulses that now heave in mine.

JOANNA.

Do you know, Miss, I dream'd of death last night, and dreams, they say, always go by contraries. Now mind, Miss, if you a'n't married before the year turns grey.

GERTRUDE.

To dreams I give no heed. They're falsehood's game,
The mockeries of the mind when reason sleeps;—

Truth owns them not:—but this is not the time
For idle jests; they only point the edge
Of grief, and render her more keen to stab,
And sure this need not be. Talk gravely, girl.

JOANNA.

By my troth I wouldn't make you unhappy, Miss, for the best boddice in your wardrobe. I only told you what I had been dreaming to make you a little merry after so many tears. I'm sure if I had cried half as much as you have, I should be as dry as a parched pea.

GERTRUDE.

There is a pang which the tear will not follow!
It is that heart-wrench when the blood stands still,
And the tired pulse a moment stays its throb.
'Tis when the o'erwrought senses madly reel,
And stagger in oblivion's dreariness.
I have endured that pang, but still the life
Repels the shock, and triumphs in its strength.

JOANNA.

Well now, Miss, if I were you, I'd be merry in spite of sorrow. Yours is not the age for moping. You'll never sing and be merry younger. La! Miss, I've had many a cross in my time, but I never grieve, not I. I always find that it makes one grow lean, and leanness is no improvement to a woman. Her skin is then nothing but a sack of problems. She never looks well in skeleton. Flesh and blood are the only true tokens of beauty.

GERTRUDE.

Thy jests are rude, I cannot bear them now.
Another time, and I might haply think them
Of better savour; merriment has lost
For me its zest, and falls a dead weight o'er me. [*Exit.*

JOANNA (*alone*).

I'm sure!—Pretty payment one gets for one's kind offices: more cuffs than good words methinks. Let her blubber till her eyes blister, an ungracious—she may pine herself into a jaundice for aught I care. Never will I try again to stop a tear of hers though I should be sure to save her eyes from rheum—they may glue together for me. [*Exit angrily.*

SCENE VI.

Changes to a Forest—the trunk of a blasted Oak appears in the Scene.

Enter BERNARDINE.

BERNARDINE.

Praised be good luck! Good luck, thou shalt be henceforward my divinity! I owe thee much. Through thee have I got safe out of that horrible place of worldly torment. I much doubt if purgatory could yield worse quarters.

Barring the disagreeable temperature of the latter, I think I should be almost disposed to give it the preference. I now begin to feel that I was'nt born to be one of the doom'd.

DON FELIX *issues from the trunk of the tree disguised.* BERNARDINE *starts.*

Avaunt thee, Satan! (*Crosses himself.*)

DON FELIX.

Dost thou not know me?

BERNARDINE (*recognising him*).

Aye, for as brave a gentleman as ever denied quarter to a cut-throat. But what cloud didst thou drop from, Signor?

DON FELIX.

None, Bernardine: the trunk of this scathed tree
Has given me shelter from the midnight blast
Since our last sudden parting: but in turn,
Tell me how thou didst scale those frightful walls,
Whose heavenward brows do beetle o'er their base,
And mock the wildered vision?

BERNARDINE.

Bless your ignorance, I had no manner of occasion to take any such flight. Those gentlemen in sable, who look as if they had robbed the coffins of their draperies for cassocks, and who, under his particular badges, cater so abundantly for the Devil, saw very plainly that I was a cut above his ordinary visiters; so they took the master instead of the man.

DON FELIX.

And is St. Leon still their prisoner?

BERNARDINE.

As sure as thou art not. Poor fellow! I'm afraid he'll find but bare quarters, and worse commons; for they're not over courteous, though they do let lodgings gratis. But why art thou thus playing at hide and seek, Signor?

DON FELIX.

To 'scape the inquisitors that hunt me down,
And track me in their late retainer's blood?
I should have hurried to some distant land,
But there's a spell that keeps me fix'd to this,
And though I would, I feel I cannot break it.

BERNARDINE.

Well, take my word for it, you need not now fear any pestering from those marketers in half ducat indulgences. They know you to be an orthodox Catholic, and at the same time a gentlemen liege to the Pope. Besides, you shall have my voice in your favour, and that's *multum in parvo*, as my godfather the fat prior used to say when he stuffed his huge, round, naked pate into a tight nightcap.

DON FELIX.

Poor Gertrude! thine are melancholy hours!
A sire's imprisonment, a brother's flight,
Are seeds for sorrow's ripening. Oh! that joy
Would mar their growth, and blossom where they thrive!

I must away; though she believes me fled,
I'll hover nigh to yield her succour still. [*Exit.*

BERNARDINE (*alone*).

Sooth, gallantry's thy hobby, but take care thou dost not ride him blind. Humph! he's a young man well enough in his way, but in my mind too much of a noodle ever to be a Solomon. Bless me! he's always at cross purposes; for ever knocking his skull against a post for the ease of his heart. Oh, this love! 'tis like a stew'd prune, sweet indeed, what little there is on't, yet but meagre fare after all for a hungry appetite. It dwindles a man down to the mere form and semblance; the essence of manhood evaporates under the influence of its whimsical freaks and vagaries. And should he look fat, 'tis flat deception; nothing more than a puffing out with sighings and the blue devils. Your swain in love is like a bottle of champaign, frothy and spirited enough at the opening, but soon subsiding into staleness and insipidity. As for me now——

ST. LEON *enters hastily, as pursued.*

ST. LEON.

They gain upon me, and I'm faint with travel—
(*Sees* BERNARDINE.)
Screen me, good fellow, from the hot pursuit
That now close presses on me, and I'll pay
Thy services beyond a prince's ransom.

BERNARDINE.

Nay, master,—as sure as there's spirit in Maraschino, 'tis the true and lawful husband of my mistress. Why, master, don't you know Bernardine, your quondam factotum, your present major-domo?

ST. LEON.

My agitated spirits blinded me.
But haste thee, I'm pursued;—where shall I fly?
I hear the distant murmur of their voices.
I'll plunge amid the thickest of the forest,
Or future racks will warn me of my flight.

BERNARDINE.

Not so, good master of mine; here's a famous hiding-place, where you may remain as secure as a moth in a dead man's hose, a toad in a stock, or a blue bottle in a drum. (*Points to the hollow tree;* ST. LEON *creeps in.*) Egad, I perceive these thief-catchers close at hand. I must see if I can't match their cunning. Demure dogs! they deserve to be cozen'd.

AN ALGUAZIL *and Followers enter.* BERNARDINE *walks to and fro, talking to himself with great earnestness.*

ALGUAZIL.

I'm sure this must have been the direction he took. Hip, friend, hast thou seen any person pass this way? (BERNARDINE *continues his pantomime.*) Is the fellow mad? Hast

thou seen any person pass through the forest? (*He remains silent; the Alguazil pulls him by the sleeve.*) Answer me, fool, for thou art no better, hast thou seen any one pass?

BERNARDINE.

Eh? bless me! What—eh? what were you pleased to say? I beg pardon, but I didn't hear. I'm always deaf when the wind's in a foul quarter.

ALGUAZIL.

I ask'd if thou hadst seen any person pass through the forest.

BERNARDINE.

Oh yes, certainly yes; indeed truly I did—yea verily about fifteen, or it may be sixteen minutes ago, for I can't be exact to a second or two—a minute more or less isn't much of an object, you know. Yes, my knight of the sour visage, I did see some person pass, as I tell thee—an old woman on her ass. She was riding a straddle, with her legs dangling like dried bodies on a gibbet.

ALGUAZIL.

No, no, not a woman but a man.

BERNARDINE.

A man? Dear—bless me—a man was it? You're certain 'twas a man? Aye, to be sure; what should it be if it wasn't a woman? why a man indubitably! Let me see—a man? By my faith I did, now I recollect; he follow'd the old woman as a crow follows a carcass. 'Twas the village apothecary's man of all work culling simples.

ALGUAZIL.

An thou dost not cease this trifling, I'll get thee a safe lodging where the sun shall never shine upon thee.

BERNARDINE.

Thou art most egregiously condescending; thanks to thy politeness, but I had much rather decline the obligation. I can supply myself with a lodging, thank ye.

ALGUAZIL.

No more prating, fellow, but to the point. Hast thou met such a person as I'm in search after.

BERNARDINE.

And how am I to know, thou most spiritual of buzzards, what sort of an animal thou'rt in pursuit of? Is it a whale or a tomtit? But I do remember that I did see a very suspicious looking fellow a while ago; a tall, gaunt-conditioned rogue, who carried fire and brimstone in his countenance. You would have sworn he was a scoundrel by the curl of his moustache. The very hair on his head stood erect in sin. His eyes looked daggers; I almost felt them prick me as they glared upon me, scorching hot with heresy. He'd a face as long as the skirts of thy coat, and almost as black too.

ALGUAZIL.

That's he! Which way did he go? I shrewdly suspect he's gone to his home.

BERNARDINE.

Ya! what a poll thine is for a country to pay tax for!

Bless thee for a ninny-hammer! He went that way (*points to the wing at which the* ALGUAZIL *entered*). Dost thou think he would go home, of all places in the world, with such a pack of thirsty bloodhounds at his heels. An he had been such a green goose, his life wouldn't have been worth an eggshell. I vow, as I'm a living man, I saw him go that way as plainly as I see the purple upon thy nose, and 'tis as much as my body is worth to swear to a lie.

ALGUAZIL.

Let's be after him instantly, for he's already got a brave start of us. [*Exit, with Followers.*

BERNARDINE.

And a plague catch the foremost! Now, master, you may come forth, for the coast is quite clear.

(ST. LEON *comes forward from the tree.*)

ST. LEON.

I must away to some remoter land,
Where the lynx eye of prejudice is closed,
And rabid beasts of prey ne'er glut themselves
On human blood. Before to-morrow's sun
Shall kiss the west, we must go hence for ever. [*Exit.*

BERNARDINE (*alone*).

And as sure as the Pope's incarnate, I'm quite of a mind; for since our stomachs, which had so long rumbled to the tune of lack o' provender, have spurn'd at a griskin, and potato parings are no longer a relish, we've been in such

confounded hot water, that I hardly know the sensation of a comfortable chill. I'll e'en now make the best of my way homeward, and drink success to our speedy removal; for travelling, they say, improves a man, and if I am in any degree short of perfection, why I may then be bettered as far as my present store of qualifications will allow. But I feel a something within me that whispers, "Honest Bernardine, thou must cover many a yard with thy foot ere the measure of thy qualities will increase." Good! 'tis a very sensible sort of a something to whisper so wisely.

[*Exit.*

SCENE VII.

As Scene III. Act I.

Enter DON FELIX, *still disguised, and* FRANCISCO.

FRANCISCO.

Are you one of the conjuror's friends? for you look plaguily like a dabbler in mischief. I hardly know whether to take thee for a friend or foe.

DON FELIX (*in a feigned voice*).

A friend, staunch as a setter on the scent.

FRANCISCO.

By what token shall I recognise thee?

DON FELIX.

By one that would win the belief of the veriest pagan that ever took beast for a divinity—by my thirst of vengeance against that veritable old wizard. If you bore him such mortal antipathy as I do, he'd never fast another Lent.

FRANCISCO.

Say'st thou so? then thou may'st be worth the trusting; yet I've some strange misgivings. However, friendship's thy best policy, and therefore I think thy interest may keep thee honest, even though thy honour should be worn threadbare. A word in thine ear,—if it be to the wise, well!—if not, take heed of the upshot! To night the wizard's house will become a bonfire to light that accursed family to the hell they're doom'd to.

DON FELIX.

Nay, man, that were no manner of use, now the principal is out of the smell of the smoke. There are only his poor helpless wife and still more helpless girl left at home, while he is casting his spells in much more dreary apartments. Though I hate the man, I wouldn't act the ruffian towards the female part of his establishment. Even a he-bear would be loth to scratch a woman.

FRANCISCO.

Aye, I begin to see how it is. Thou must let thy milk of human kindness curdle, before thou'lt suit our purpose. When 'tis got sour thou may'st be better worth the talking

to. I fear that thou art no whit better than a sheep in wolf's clothing.

DON FELIX.

Nay, doubt me not, I'm ripe for any daring. An 'twere only a man to be tortured, I wouldn't mind crimping him like a conger; but you know we've too much Castilian blood in us to go to loggerheads with women. Nay, that sly leer of thine tells me thy heart could never work a woman bale.

FRANCISCO.

Arn't they all a parcel of necromancers? Isn't it a nest of spiders? Don't the gainsayers cry fie upon the Pope's honesty in suffering them to live? Out upon't, thou snivelling brother of charity, where's thy allegiance to the church's head? Why should we spare a single one of them to help the propagation of such a reptile species?

DON FELIX.

Well, well, then, don't be in too great a hurry to show thy alacrity in God's service; nobody doubts thy zeal; do but wait until they're all snug in the house together, and then you know one burning will do for the whole.

FRANCISCO.

Content thee, man, the old heretic will soon snap over faggot elsewhere. When did the Holy Inquisition ever renew the lease of a conjuror's life? Thou'lt soon smell the swine's flesh of as arrant a wretch as ever expiated heresy over a wood fire.

DON FELIX.

Let them all burn on the same day then. A little respite from death won't make it fall one jot the lighter. Besides, 'twill give thee the more time to diet thy revenge. Nay, don't frown, man, thou'lt thank me for this counsel before mass. We'll have rare sport when the reptiles are all caged, to see how they'll dance amid the smoking. They'll caper, I'll be sworn, like crickets in a heated oven. But I'll be off and see that matters are all right; for we must be cautious, comrade, not to give room for suspicion. Never wake the serpent before you scotch it. [*Exit.*

FRANCISCO.

And I'll be close upon thy heels, for I've a very sly guess that thou art no other than some city macaroni in the disguise of a clown. I mistrust thee shrewdly. There's too much cant about thee for a true churchman.

[*Going.* BERNARDINE *enters.*

BERNARDINE.

I can't say, well met; for a rogue and an honest man are like oil and vinegar in the contact, they never mix kindly together. Sneak off, hireling!

FRANCISCO.

I thought thou hadst been safe housed on the dark side of three double bolts and a triple lock. Thou'rt sooner in the sunshine than I looked for. I had not reckoned on seeing thee abroad again.

BERNARDINE.

Thought never did a more thoughtless act than when she made thy brains her lodging. Hence with thee!—hence, I say!—a spy is a foul ulcer; its malignant humours blotch wherever they spread. Hark ye, sir knave, an thou wert not too scurvy for an honest man's foot, I'd kick thee; but I shouldn't like to soil my shoe, since 'tis my master's blacking that cleans it.

FRANCISCO.

Thy tone is loud enough for a better man. A cardinal could hardly mouth it with a braver wag of the tongue than thou dost. But gently, my bullyrook!—this blustering would seem to belie thy calling. Have a little more discretion, or my life for thee, thou'lt never pass for a conjuror. The devil will forswear thee for a very bungling ally!

BERNARDINE.

I give thee the lie in thy throat, thou most saucy dog in a lamb's wool! The hot breath of thy malice might leave a blister where it falls; 'tis virulent enough for't. But take heed, I've an antidote for thy venom. I tell thee civilly—d'ye mind me, civilly—I'm no conjuror.

FRANCISCO.

Thy pardon, ungentle railer! I had forgot. 'Tis indeed true that thy stupidity might well exonerate thee from the charge: but if thou art not, and heaven help thy lack of brains as the cause—thy master is.

BERNARDINE.

Thou liest, dung-worm! thy very skin bears the hue of thy iniquity—'tis as black as thy heart. Give the falsehood tongue again, and I'll strangle it in the birth.

FRANCISCO.

Whirr!—what a vaunter! I repeat it—thy master is a wizard—a most paramount wizard.

(BERNARDINE *seizes him by the throat.*)

BERNARDINE.

Liar! choke in thy gall, for this shall be the last of thy malice.

(FRANCISCO *is thrown down in the struggle. He shouts. Villagers rush in to his rescue.* BERNARDINE *retires.*)

FRANCISCO (*rising*).

A plague upon all muscular sinners! The fellow has the grip of an iceland bear. A peach-stone were nothing betwixt his finger and thumb—'twould crack in a twinkling. I give him joy of the next squeeze (*to Villagers*). Come near, my worthies, remember we've our work to do. Mind you all assemble punctually by torch-light, and see that you don't leave of the necromancer's haunt one stone unlevelled.

VILLAGER.

Never fear, every one of us has his heart in the enterprise, and, trust me, we'll soon make a pile of coarse gravel on't. [*Exeunt Villagers.*

FRANCISCO.

And I'll take care to grope the ruins well. I expect a double meed for my labour. [*Exit.*

SCENE VIII.

As in Scene I. Act II.

Enter ST. LEON *and* MADAME ST. LEON.

MADAME ST. LEON.

Thou art not safe; the threatening form of peril
Advances on thy heels with stealthy strides.
The very air breathes nought but murmurings,
And as they pass upon the ear, thy name
Swells the reluctant breeze. Ere morning streak
With his young light the orient, fly these walls,
Where ruin yawns around thee.

ST. LEON.

Be thy wish
My future guide to practise! But in sooth,
I never could suspect the withered arm
Of prejudice so strong, and did despise,
Without computing, strength.

MADAME ST. LEON.

'Twas rashly done—
But still thou art not safe.

ST. LEON.

I shall away
With thee and all my house.

MADAME ST. LEON.

I dread the search
Of those fell hunters after human prey,
Who, like the blood-hound, snuff the guiding scent,
And never lose it till they meet their victim.
Should they suspect thee here, their vigilance
Would soon secure thee.

ST. LEON.

No! the sordid wretch
Who op'd my dungeon's portals for a bribe,
Believes me on a widely different route,
And he may urge my foes upon the track
To have his bribe renew'd.

MADAME ST. LEON.

'Till morn thou'rt safe.
Thou must go hence alone: there is no time
For tardy preparations—with the dawn
Fly to a better country, where thy wife
And child will shortly follow thee.

[*Exit.*

ST. LEON (*alone*).

'Tis well!

I must go hence, and search in other lands
That peace so rudely snatch'd from me in this.
Mankind shall only know me as their friend;
And, as successive ages o'er me roll,
I'll watch the interests of this ingrate world,
And raise a name as glorious as a god's. [*Exit.*

Enter BERNARDINE *and* JOANNA.

JOANNA.

Do you know, Bernardine, I'm sure there's something foul going on in the village; mind me, if there a'n't. For all the people there seem to look so queer at one, and begin a-whispering and a-nudging one another, the moment one shows one's face among 'em, as if they thought one was only fit to be cast dirt upon!

BERNARDINE.

I begin myself to suspect that they're after no good. I have brushed up three or four old trusty toledos below, and given one a-piece to the serving-men, in case that tawny knave, Francisco, should take it into his brainless head to make another attack; for though the fellow's as great a coward as need be, he's as full of rancour as a mad dog.

JOANNA.

But la! Bernardine, what shall we women do if those

nasty good-for-nothing fellows should come again, to scare us out of our seven senses?

BERNARDINE.

You'd better all betake yourselves to the garrets. You will be safe enough in the upper stories; besides, there you'll be out of the way.

JOANNA.

Holy St. Thomas! Bernardine, the very thought sets me all of a glow. I'm already as moist as an April morning. I shall go tell my mistress what I suspect, and then lock myself into my bed-room till daylight.

BERNARDINE.

Now you are going to be very silly. What good will all this hubbub do, when there may be no cause for alarm? Don't frighten Madame and Miss at all events until there really is danger. Hap what may, we are enough to defend the house, and perdition to every soul, I say, that dares hold up a hostile hand against it! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IX.

The outside of ST. LEON'S *house. The Village appears in the perspective. Stage darkened. Villagers with lighted torches are seen passing in the distance at intervals.*

Enter FRANCISCO *and a* VILLAGER.

FRANCISCO (*in a subdued tone*).

Is the whole party assembled, and have my orders been obeyed?

VILLAGER.

Aye, there are twenty stout hearts: each has his torch, and a good cudgel, and we only wait your signal.

FRANCISCO.

That you will have from the conjuror's house. A brave fellow, on whom I can depend, is now ripening our plot within it. He is to fire it in different places, and when the flames are strong enough to alarm the family, he will give the signal of approach, by throwing a rocket from the lower window; then must we advance, and accomplish the destruction.

VILLAGER.

Bravely managed! I'll go and prepare our bold fellows for their enterprise.

FRANCISCO.

Aye, and don't let them be startled if there should be a little show of resistance. That Bernardine is a terrible rascal: he must be knock'd on the head the first thing.

VILLAGER.

Never fear; I'll take especial care of that. [*Exit*

FRANCISCO.

I'd better retire too, and await the signal. [*Exit.*

Enter BERNARDINE.

BERNARDINE.

I shall keep a sharp look-out here; for I'm sure, from what dropped from that blood-hungry cannibal Francisco to Joanna, he has some cut-throat design in hand. In order to prevent surprise, I shan't take a wink o' sleep to-night.

Enter a SERVANT, *from the House.*

SERVANT.

Pray come in, Mr. Bernardine, there's a terrible smell of fire in the house, and we can't tell where it comes from.

BERNARDINE.

Go into every room, and see if all's safe. Why do you stand there, gaping like a pounded ass? Bestir thee, fellow! Follow me, and bid all the servants look about 'em.

[*Exit, with* SERVANT.

A rocket is fired from the window. FRANCISCO *and Villagers rush in immediately after, and attack the house. It appears fired in different places.* BERNARDINE *enters, followed by several domestics, armed. They attack the assailants. Meanwhile* ST. LEON *enters from the grotto, with a drawn sabre. The Villagers are repulsed, after a vigorous struggle.*

ST. LEON.

Where are my wife and child? Oh, God! the flames
Branch to the roof!—accursed, damned villains!

The Villagers, headed by FRANCISCO, *renew the assault.* DON FELIX *enters, and rushes into the burning edifice. After a pause, he is seen bearing* GERTRUDE *through the flaming chambers. At length he enters with her insensible in his arms. While this is passing,* MADAME ST. LEON *appears*

at the top of the house. ST. LEON *attempts to rush forward to save her, but is withheld by the flames bursting through the doorway.* BERNARDINE, *who has been engaged with* FRANCISCO, *now seizes him, drags him to the burning ruins, and hurls him headlong into the flames. At this moment the house falls.* ST. LEON *drops senseless. The scene closes.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

THE SCENE OF THE THIRD ACT IS LAID IN AND NEAR SEVILLE.

SCENE I.

A Street in the City of Seville. The GOVERNOR'S *house appears at the end of the stage. A* SENTINEL *is stationed on each side of the gate.*

Enter DON FELIX.

SENTINEL.

Who's there?

DON FELIX.

A friend!

SENTINEL.

Your business?

DON FELIX.

That requires
A nobler ear than thine.

SENTINEL.

You pass not here.
You are too niggard of your courtesy.

DON FELIX.

But I have matter for your master's ear,
And must have audience instantly.

SENTINEL.

Nay—must?
That is the indefeasible right of kings,
And ne'er belonged to subject.

DON FELIX.

Come, here's gold—
Let me but pass and I'll reward thee double.

SENTINEL.

Go then, and prosper!

DON FELIX.

If thy prayers pursue me,
Prosperity will never track my steps.

(*Enters the gateway.*)

SCENE II.

Interior of the Governor's house.

Enter CHARLES ST. LEON *and a* SERVANT.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Bid the stranger enter. (SERVANT *ushers in* DON FELIX *and exit.*)
Your business, Signor?

DON FELIX.

That voice!—impossible!—am I awake,
Or do I dream? Speak and confirm me,—Charles!

CHARLES ST. LEON.

My heart bounds fiercely at that dear appeal,
And leaps up to my throat. (*They embrace.*) Felix, this hour
Brightens the surly gloom that long has hung
O'er all my past of life, and through my soul
Darts a pure beam of joy. But to what cause
Am I to charge your presence?

DON FELIX.

One, I fear,
Connected with a tale, that o'er thy peace
Shall cast the cramps of death.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

In brief, disclose
This hydra of the tongue, and I will strive
To hold life on, although within its breath
Lurk'd worse than aconite. Too long, alas!
My senses have been steep'd in misery's gall,
To curl the lip at trifles; and my heart—
As the rough rock beats back the lashing surge,
Itself unmoved, while round it chafes and roars
The gurgling brine—repels the assaults of grief,
Fix'd 'midst the shatter'd tempest of its sorrows,
Rugged and bleak, and bare, but fretted o'er
And darken'd by the storm.

DON FELIX.

Alas! my friend,
Mine's a rough task for friendship, and howe'er
Sorrow may sear the heart, 'tis but a crust
In which she cases it; and, once stript off,
Like a thin cicatrice from a green wound,
The core is quick and sensitive. In sooth,
I have a story for thy secret ear,
Shall force the blood in quicker eddies through thee,
And pierce each cranny where sensation lurks,
To rouse it to rebellion. I must see
Thy bosom writhe to where I point the torture.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Nay, Felix, I've been arm'd too long against

The drear contingencies of human life,
To wince against their sting. Burst on mine ear
The thunder of sad tidings! Doubt me not,
I'm strong to bear, nor tremble at the conflict.

DON FELIX.

First to the purpose of my interview
With Seville's governor. I sought him, Charles,
Little expecting that my friend was he,
To ask employment 'gainst the rebel chief
That now infests your neighbourhood.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Indeed?
The fancy's strange, and 'tis no gentle hazard.
What rashness, Felix, thus can tempt thy steps
To distant perils, from a blessed home?

DON FELIX.

I am become a wanderer from that home
By a stern parent's curse—an outcast now,
I fly a father's hate. I took to wife
A maid, held by her sex a paragon,
But took her 'gainst his will.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Knew I the maid?

DON FELIX.

Thy sister.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

How—my sister! Madman, madman!

DON FELIX.

She won my heart, and spite all weaker scruples,
I forged joy's golden link, and made her mine.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

And are my kin then fated to bestow
The spotted leprosy of shame, the brand
Of foul dishonour, upon all who meet them
In kind or social contact? Come, be brief,
And end thy direful tale.

DON FELIX.

Then mark me, Charles.
At thy departing, scandal's voice grew loud,
And rumour daily murmured fearful tales
Against thy sire's vocation, till the crowd
Believed him one of Satan's delegates,
And sought his ruin. They attacked his house,
Placed underneath its beams the burning brand,
When with dire roar the greedy element
Curled up in ruddy volumes to the skies,
And one vast ruin smoked o'er all the spot.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Down my foreboding heart! Nay, rouse not yet!
Be still, rebellious blood! I hear thee—on—
Cramp not thy tale, but give its horrors breath.
My mother?—speak! My mother, father?—tell me!

DON FELIX.

Thy mother, reckless till the last of danger,

Was swallow'd in the fire. Thy sire escaped.
Thy sister was by these weak sinews snatch'd
From the beleaguering element of death;
And when her days of mourning had gone by,
Pair'd her fond heart with mine.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Has heaven a bolt
More withering than thy ominous tongue has hurl'd?
What hopes are left me now? Thou stubborn link
That binds man down to wretchedness crack, crack—
This is too much for nature! Where's thy wife?

DON FELIX.

I left her in a narrow street hard by,
At a small lodging which our scanty means
Could poorly furnish.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Bring her to these arms.

[*Exeunt at opposite sides.*

SCENE III.

A remote House in the Suburbs of Seville. ST. LEON *enters under the assumed name of* MONTALBAN. *His appearance is now that of a young man about five-and-twenty years old.*

ST. LEON (*alone*).

Ill timed ambition! how thy blighting arm
Levels our mortal peace! Where'er I tread,
An asp is in my path. To me the world
Seems poised within a moral atmosphere,
More baneful far than the mephitic mine,
Whose deadly vapours do destruction's work,
And make its shades a Golgotha. Alas!
I sigh'd for wealth as the imagined means
Of bliss on earth, but find it is the root
Of an envenom'd weed, that doth distil
More poisons than that noxious island tree,
Beneath the shelter of whose fatal boughs
The vilest vermin crawl and writhe in death.
My wealth has shower'd a torrent o'er my head
Of mingled horrors. I have lost my wife,
My children—all that claim'd my nature's love;

And now I roam an isolated man,
Without a friend to cheer. This cloak of youth,
O'er which time ne'er can cast his bronzing rust,
Serves but to render sorrow's bitter plant
A growing evergreen that shall produce
A sad perennity of loathsome fruit.
Oh! for some kindred spirit of the world's scorn
To share my griefs, and clasp unto my bosom
To slake its parching agonies!

SERVANT *enters.*

Who's there?

SERVANT.

A cavalier of strange mysterious seeming
Demands admittance.

ST. LEON.

Give him instant welcome.

[SERVANT *exit.*

To me 'twere luxury to meet a wretch
Who, like myself, skulks from the light of truth,
And wraps himself in mystery.

DE LUQUE *enters, his appearance gigantic and ferocious, his face horribly scarred, his bearing resolute.*

Good friend,
Your business?

DE LUQUE.

That is quickly told. Behold,
Before thee stands unscathed the rebel chief,
Whose prowess has through all the realm of Spain
Spread terror wider than its desolation.
I come a suitor to thee.

ST. LEON.

State your will.

DE LUQUE.

Fame's trumpet tongue has busily proclaim'd
Beyond the limits of our hemisphere
The marvel of thy deeds. In mute amaze
The ragged tenants of the lazarhouse
Listen and wonder, while their golden god
Buys their base homage. Now no lazy clown
Groans out his cant of poverty, but thou
Throw'st in his lap thy gold, as 'twere a drug
That stain'd thy conscience.

ST. LEON.

Ha! And who art thou
That darest thus tax my charities?

DE LUQUE.

A man!
But one who brooks not haughty questioning;
One who knows better to command than sue—
Who, when he sues, commands. I come to ask

A portion of that gold—that yellow pest
Which thou dost scatter with a lavish hand
Among the ignorant and prurient throng,
Who only blotch thy bounties with their vices,
And raise a stagnant mist around thy virtue.

ST. LEON.

If gold's thy only object, freely take
Of my abundance, for thy frankness draws me,
Despite thy stern and unfamiliar aspect,
Tow'rds thee in fellowship.

DE LUQUE.

First know the man
With whom you would in fellowship unite,
Before you seal the contract. In my breast
The gathering drops of hate for ever freeze,
Enlarging in their growth like polar ice,
Intense as that, and deadlier to the touch
Of melting pity. I've been sear'd and scorched
Beneath oppression's fierce meridian,
Until my marrow has become a rock
To which my heart has grown participant
Of its stern nature.

ST. LEON.

But is there no sun
To thaw the frost of apathy within thee?
Are all thy sympathies extinct?

DE LUQUE.

All—all!

My heart is marble. Hear and mark, Montalban!
I had a wife and child; my very soul
Was so absorbed in their's, that all the three
Formed one united whole: their hearts to mine
Clung as if their very being hung upon't.
Though I ne'er joined the fashion of the times
And lavished fulsome kisses on their cheeks,
Or fumbled them with pestilent caresses,
Ringing my hourly darlings in their ears,
Like modern sires and husbands,—ne'ertheless
I loved them with a love so absolute,
That only in the sunshine of their smiles
Did my warped spirit feel a joy. My life
Throve with their thriving; drooped with their decay;
And only in that atmosphere I lived,
Where they shed warmth and brightness.

ST. LEON.

Thou hast roused
The slumbering memory of happier times,
When I, like thee, was blest. I had a wife
And children too; but they, alas! are gone,
Where I would follow them, yet dare not!

DE LUQUE.

Ha!
Was it a human hand that dealt the plague

Which made thy paradise a desert? No!
Heaven deals its vengeance—man must bow to that—
But when the grovelling likeness of ourselves
Lords it in idle mockery o'er his fellows,
And opes a hell to torture us, 'tis then
The rebel swells within us, and the clash
Of hostile passions jars into a storm.

ST. LEON.

I have endured what long has gnarled my heart,
And left it scarcely pervious to the probe
Of keen sensation. I have suffered much,
Yet bear withal no hatred to mankind.

DE LUQUE.

Hear my brief history, and tell me then
If I have room for love to mortal man.
My wife had early joined in Luther's creed,
And in the mother's faith the child was reared;
Whilst I, who looked on forms as on old saws,
For which antiquity has gained respect,
Still owned the Pope pre-eminent. My life,
Which was retired, drew from the meddling throng
A scrutiny that soon conveyed strange tales
Round the distempered neighbourhood, and I
Was pointed at as one foredoomed by heaven!

ST. LEON.

Our lot has been too similarly cast
Not to feel fellowship.

DE LUQUE.

Now mark the close
Of my brief tale. My poor unconscious wife
Was torn from these rough arms, and, with her child,
Shrieking for mercy to the ears of monsters,
Dragged to that den of priestcraft, where the doom
Is past unheard. There the devouring flames
Clung round their bodies, 'till the gasp of death
Set free the guiltless spirit.

ST. LEON.

Injured wretch!
I pity thee.

DE LUQUE.

Nay, pity not, but hate!
Join with me in my loathing to mankind,
And I will clench thy palm—the first rude pledge
Of friendship, but to be dissolved in death.
Montalban, there are horrors in the past,
Which, like so many never-dying worms,
Feed on my very vitals. Thou hast roused
Memories of days gone by, when, in my fair
And undimmed horoscope, the radiant star
Of my young destiny, by heaven's own hand,
Seemed poised in the blue void, without a cloud
To mar its brightness; but alas! how soon
To be o'ercast with dire and damning ills.

ST. LEON.

Nay, why so stern?

DE LUQUE.

Ask the storm why it howls!
Couldst thou but look into my soul, and there
Behold the plague-spots which have seared it o'er,
Thou wouldst not ask me why I am so stern?
I have done deeds too black for the fair heavens
To look upon, and my charged spirit groans
Beneath its load of guilt. The time is come
When expiation must be made. Accept
The hospitality I offer thee,
For I would have thee witness that my death
Shall be as firm and fearless as my life.
Nigh where the Esta opes her feeble source
Is the shunned outlaw's home: partake its cheer.
Thou'lt meet a rough but a right honest welcome.

ST. LEON.

I will accept thy courtesy, and when
We know each other's humours, we may live
On terms of closer union. Lead the way. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

As Scene II. Act III.

Enter DON FELIX *and* GERTRUDE.

DON FELIX.

Come, cheer thee, love.

Enter CHARLES ST. LEON.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Gertrude, God bless thee!

GERTRUDE.

Charles!

This is a moment that in part subdues
The horrors of the past, which even now
Cling to the memory with so fierce a grasp
That the encumbered spirit vainly strives
To shake them off. But let us change this theme
For one of gentler tenor. Tell me, brother,
What rare vicissitude of fortune raised thee
To such a proud distinction.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Thou shalt learn.

When from that home—where, like a frighted dove,
Peace had unfurled her wings and soar'd away—
I fled, to woo her to my blighted heart,
Chance drew me to the court. An army then
Was ordered to the Milanese. I join'd
Those legions, which o'er proud Pavia's walls
Dashed the red carnage. On that glorious day
I reaped the trophies of my virgin prowess.
My generous comrades registered my name
Among the sons of chivalry. I grew
In rank and honour, till my sovereign marked me,
And, though I poorly merited the boon,
Raised me to this high dignity.—But say,
Where is our sire? Did you not say he 'scaped?

(*To* DON FELIX.)

DON FELIX.

Spare her the anguish of remembrance, Charles,
It works upon her sorrows, and the tale
Renews their keenness.

GERTRUDE.

On that fatal night,
When o'er the smouldering ruins of our house
The slackening flames still hissed their dying vengeance,
My sire,—who, while destruction's work went on,
O'ercome with horror at the sight, had fall'n,
Fainting, upon the dry and torrid earth,—

Leaped from the parching ground; and when he saw
Where havoc's waste had been, rush'd desperate
From the distracting scene, and to this hour
No tidings have we heard.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Heaven's will be done!
His gold has been a drug of poison. All
His mortal joys have withered in the tasting.

DON FELIX.

But we have 'scaped its venom.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Well, no more
Of sorrow now, 'tis an insidious guest,
That serves but to depress the anxious soul
When its best energies are called for. Soon
I lead some chosen bands against the hold
Of that arch rebel, Luque. Your counsel, Felix,
Will serve me in my need.

DON FELIX.

Command it, now
As ever.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

I accept it willingly.

GERTRUDE.

Felix, when falls the deafening crash of war,
With sweeping desolation in her van,

Remember that thy Gertrude lives in thee.

[*Exeunt* GERTRUDE *and* DON FELIX.

BERNARDINE *enters, and kneels to* CHARLES ST. LEON.

BERNARDINE.

Bless thee, my dear young master, bless thee! Heaven could never tire in doing anything so worthy of its justice. The sight of thee is the best prospect these eyes have look'd upon since they last gazed on thee.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Rise, Bernardine; that posture ill beseems
The guardian of my infancy. Thy hand.

BERNARDINE (*rising*).

Lord love your tenderness! 'tis sweeter to my taste than cream to a cat's. The apple of my eye or the faculty of articulation isn't dearer to me than thou art. Ah! I remember thee when thy most eloquent phrase was a nursery squall. Often have I dandled thee in these arms, when thou wert not higher than a radish. Thou wert a rare child for roaring, I warrant me.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Aye, Bernardine, when we look back on time,
We read an awful lesson in the past
That fits us for the future. But a truce
To thoughts that waft us backward on events
O'er which foul storms have gathered. If thou wilt,

Here shalt thou find a home, and, if thou canst,
Be happy in thy age.

BERNARDINE.

I always do my best to be happy, for I've a natural propensity to comfort. The letter *I* was always my favourite of the whole alphabet, yet it often turns out to be a blind *I*. There are times when I find myself soused head and ears into the muddy waters of melancholy, where my spirits ebb faster than tides at the full of the moon. However I generally contrive to find the runaways at the bottom of my can, thanks to brandy and sour grapes. Poor Joanna! she verily died of a burning fever; the smell of that dismal sacrifice will never be out of my nostrils. I never tasted a bit of fried pig's griskin for a whole Lent after, but I thought of her unhappy roasting. Pork—pork—'tis my aversion. In good sooth, 'tis a savory memorial when there's a chopped onion in it, but I detest it nevertheless. Poor Joanna! thine was a fiery passage out of this world!

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Enough, good fellow, now. I've work on hand
Demands my presence. Should thy will incline thee
To be the future steward of my house,
Thou'lt find me ever an indulgent master. [*Exit.*

BERNARDINE (*alone*).

This is extremely agreeable promotion. I shall wear a blue riband in my button-hole to designate my order—

grand master of the cellar and knight of the kitchen:—Sir Bernardine—hem! I shall make all the servants get drunk at my installation, and order myself to be carried to bed by the most agreeable of the waiting-maids. I intend to look as big among 'em as a verger in a church, or a cock on his own dunghill, crowing louder than the latter and outstrutting both. I'll make all my dependents turn pale if I do but sneeze; they shall start at the fall of my footstep as a parcel of puppies at the sound of a drum. I shall institute sumptuary regulations, for if they feed too well 'tis sure to make the rascals lazy, and I'd have them as agile as weasels and as lean into the bargain. Fat is a sad incumbrance to a domestic; a hugging bedfellow that can't be too soon got rid of. Now to enter on my post of honour. [*Struts off.*

SCENE V.

The outside of DE LUQUE'S *castle. The prospect around wild and dreary. Under the walls appears a moat, over which is a drawbridge.* ST. LEON *and* DE LUQUE *enter. The latter winds a horn; the bridge falls; they pass over it; it is drawn up immediately.* GUZMAN *and* CASCA *enter.*

CASCA.

This will be rare news for our lads within. The governor, it seems, has mustered his lazy battalions, and is going to attack our good old walls. He may as well fire against the clouds; neither his cannon nor his musquetry will be able to shake them.

GUZMAN.

I dare be sworn we shall have a tough struggle for it. Give the devil his due, the governor is a brave rascal.

CASCA.

But what will his bravery be worth, if our chief's Toledo once light upon his casque?

GUZMAN.

'Twill drive the brains from his skull and make it a lodging-house for worms. Filthy feeders! they diet as

daintily upon common carrion as upon that which was once animated by the spirit of a hero. Still our enemy's no craven, and I've a notion there'll be tight work before the setting of another sun.

CASCA.

The tighter the work the higher will rise our credit. Old crones already make use of our names to frighten their brats into godliness; what then will they do upon the further growth of our reputation?

GUZMAN.

Offer up their church prayers to keep them from our clutch, and dream of us as the torturers of their purgatory.

CASCA.

I must go sharpen my sabre. I like to see it cut sheer when I draw it against the throat of a monarchy-man. Clean work always speaks well of the labourer.

(*He winds a horn; the bridge falls.* GUZMAN *and* CASCA *pass over. It is drawn up as before.*)

SCENE VI.

A large gloomy apartment in DE LUQUE'S *castle. The roof is supported on rows of massy pillars, upon which are hung various pieces of old armour. Against some are nailed the faces of wolves, boars, &c., and from others are suspended the skins of different beasts of prey.* ST. LEON *and* DE LUQUE *are seen sitting at the upper end of an antique table, round which are seated several of the latter's comrades, all of very ferocious appearance.*

DE LUQUE.

Montalban, let me pledge thee in the bowl
That consecrates our friendship. (*They rise.*) Thou shalt learn
The ties that bind me to this joyless world,
And hold me on to suffering, when one stab
Would cast me on the sea that has no shore.
I'm sick of life and its infirmities,
And long to go to that eternal sleep
Where dreams distract not, and perception's still'd
In everlasting silence. Come what may,
I fear not a hereafter,—hell or heaven.
My soul upon the hazard.

ST. LEON.

Rave not thus.

DE LUQUE.

Vengeance, whose mingled cup to souls like mine
Imparts new energies, is the dark spell
That cheers my dreary days. On all mankind
My lust of ruin falls. Man armed against me
Before I gave him cause, and hurled me down
From that bright eminence where all was bliss,
Into the gulf of bottomless perdition.

ST. LEON.

But should all suffer for the crimes of some?
Virtue is not extinct in every breast,
Nor man so deep in guilt, but o'er the world
Some rays of goodness gleam.

DE LUQUE.

I war on all.
If a bright snake, whose smooth and speckled skin
Had wooed thy admiration, in his mood
Of subtle malice, had assailed thy flesh,
And poured his numbing poisons through thy blood,
Wouldst thou not trample on the reptile's neck,
And wage thenceforward war with all the species?

ST. LEON.

I cannot screw my feelings to that pitch
Which wakes such frightful discord in the soul.

I still have room for pity, though my heart
Can now find nought to venerate.

DE LUQUE.

What blood
Distempered with foul wrongs, can calmly flow?
'Twill, like the heated cauldron's tawny scum,
Boil, fierce and fervid, through its mazy channels.
I have been steeped in torment, but my heart,
Too hard to break, will still survive the blasting.
I feel a devil there, nursed into life
By the long broodings of revenge. My brain
Dances in giddy whirl, when I behold
The waste of war, and snuff her tainted gale.
Within me now the serpent's egg is hatched,
And mine own bowels feel the quickened worm
Gnaw, gnaw for ever,—hell is burning there—
What then can I have now to do with heaven?
I have my own peculiar harmonies.
The shriek of death bursts on my greedy ear
With a shrill voice of welcome, and the groan
Of torture is my sweetest recreation.

ST. LEON.

Oh! what a wilderness of human passion
O'erspreads thy better nature! when did love
Thrive in so stern a soil! Thy breast has still
Beneath the barren surface that now hides it,
A mould where sympathy may strike its root.

DE LUQUE.

Sayest thou?—my sympathies are crushed and dead.
If through thy marrow thrilled the burning pang
That shook with strange convulsion every nerve,—
Forced thy jarred bones to clatter in their joints,
And dashed the whirlwind through thy reeling brain,
Where the fierce spirit of the passions tossed
On its own rack of torture;—if thy manhood,
Shrunk in the palsying gripe of wretchedness,
Through human craft, was, like a blighted leaf
Stripped from the bough, and crisped by biting frosts,
A thing for every passer-by to spurn,
And the fell shaft of vengeance in thy grasp,
Wouldst thou not fling the sure destruction down,
And whelm thy foes at once?

ST. LEON.

No, thanks to heaven,
I've still some glimmerings of virtue left
To light the waste within me, though the gloom
Of wretchedness obscures them. When we met,
The likeness of our destinies inspired
A wish to name thee friend; but thy dark mind
Recoils from friendship, and provokes my dread.

DE LUQUE.

I'll give thee ampler cause. It ill comports
With my rough mood to suffer cold restraint
To warp my eager wishes. Hear me, coward!

The man who joins in amity with me
Must have a soul capacious as the world,
Where all the bright and dark of destiny
Do meet and concentrate—where all that's foul
In the black catalogue of human crime,
May find a refuge; where no puny virtue
Skulks in to raise a dam against the course
Of passion's headlong torrent; where the knell
Of pity has been rung, and all is horror.

ST. LEON.

Coward! who dares to call Montalban coward?

DE LUQUE.

De Luque! and to thy quick ear echoes it—
Coward! dost hear?—again I call thee coward!

ST. LEON.

Back in thy teeth I cast the taunting lie,
And dare thee to the proof.

DE LUQUE.

Perdition catch thee!
Take that and tremble. (*Strikes him.*)

ST. LEON.

Bear it, witness heaven!

(*He rushes forward, snatches a pistol from* DE LUQUE'S *girdle, who dashes his arm aside, and the pistol explodes.*)

DE LUQUE.

Impotent, drivelling coward!

(*He springs upon* ST. LEON, *and casts him on the floor insensible.* GUZMAN *and* CASCA *enter.*)

Well! what now?

CASCA.

The governor has called fresh troops into the town, and you may look for a visit at short notice.

DE LUQUE.

May every sinew shrink that fails to fling
Destruction on the assaulters! Comrades arm; (*all rise*)
And let those cringing patriots, who have basked
Like serpents in the sun, in the warm beams
Of a court's pageantry, behold our arms
Glare o'er these ramparts. Shortly shall they feel
The dint that shall upon their puny heads
Do the brief work of death. The instinctive bird
Already gives the anticipating croak
Of a full banquet. Bear to the eastern vaults
Yon droning casuist;—there let him dream,
And groan a dirge over his martyred virtues.

(GUZMAN *and* CASCA *bear off* ST. LEON.)

REBELS.

Conquest or death!

DE LUQUE.

Be that our watchword now. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII.

The Vaults of the Castle. GUZMAN *and* CASCA *bear in* ST. LEON, *place him upon the ground, and retire. He gradually recovers, and raises himself upon his arm.*

ST. LEON.

Where am I? Ah! these fetid exhalations
That choke the nostril and confuse the brain—
These clammy dews that hang upon my brow,
And from my drenched locks drip;—this cavern's gloom
That makes e'en day-light hideous, and the slime
With which the flinty roof's glazed o'er—all—all
Make dismal answer. Madman that I was
To trust a villain's friendship!

(*He rises.* DE LUQUE *enters.*)

Tyrant, why
This breach of hospitality?

DE LUQUE.

My will
Laughs at restraint, and is beside all form.
Ask'st thou the cause why I have sent thee hither?
Because I hate thee, and my hate shall draw
The groan from thy full bosom. Thou hast roused
The demon in me,—shudder at its fury.

ST. LEON.

What is thy cause of hate? I never wronged thee.

DE LUQUE.

Hast thou not dared to pity human kind
And, like a puling idiot at the moon,
Smiled where I chose to frown? All men my foes—
But such as bear me likeness in my mood
Of dire revenge—I loathe the craven tongue
That chaunts their eulogy.

ST. LEON.

Do then thy worst.
Upon thy rugged brow I trace the lines
Of death marked legibly. I fear not that—
Rid me of life, and all my cares at once.

DE LUQUE.

Idiot! I would not kill thee. With thy death
Would end my pleasure at beholding thee
Groan o'er thy daily tortures. Here, enclosed
Within this dreary charnel, ne'er the sun
Shall glad thee with his beams: the damps of night
Shall cramp thy limbs, and the long mouldering stone
Crumble upon thy head: the slimy worm,
Ere the reluctant spark of life be quenched,
Shall leave its glistening trail upon thy flesh,
On which it soon must batten. Morn and eve
I shall be nigh to taunt thee with my scorn,

To see thee grin and writhe, and hear thee howl,
Gnash thy impatient jaws and madly curse
The deep damnation of thy agonies.
Like a foul vampire, to thy heart I'll cling,
And drain the sap of life so tardily
That thou shalt seem to be an age in dying.

ST. LEON.

Will not a bribe relax thee? I can pay
A princely ransom.

DE LUQUE.

I will have thy gold,
And torture thee to boot. Thou art the tool
By which I'll work the engines of my wrath.
I'll keep thee for my purpose, use thy gold
At will, and buffet thee in thankfulness.

ST. LEON.

No rack shall force a single ingot from me
But as the price of liberty.

DE LUQUE.

Take heed,
Nor predetermine rashly. I have learned
Where lies the secret whence accrues thy wealth.
A crazy chest, which thou didst order hither
With special cautions, I have oped; within
I marked a mixture of strange drugs, with scales
And crucibles, and tools that told their purpose.

Thine is the power of fashioning at will
Peruvian ore, and for De Luque that power
Shall now alone be exercised.

ST. LEON.

Begone!
For by my soul's eternal peace I swear,
Never to prostitute my powers to one
Who feels so vilely.

DE LUQUE.

Force shall change thy tone,
And make thee crouch and bend the knee in homage;
And like a frighted cur when the foot spurns it,
Fawn to the level of my footstool. Aye,
Upon that head I'll plant my heel in scorn,
And it shall be my glory's pedestal.
Ere dawn shall paint the horizon with its grey,
I shall expect thy tribute. I require
Ten thousand pistoles; have the sum prepared,
Or tremble at my vengeance.

ST. LEON.

May the curse
Of infamy fall on me if I heed thee!

(*Enters a recess of the vault.*)

DE LUQUE.

'Tis well. I leave thee now to thy repose.
To-morrow's dawn will find thy tone less high.

[*Exit, fastening the door.*

SCENE VIII.

The interior of a tent. CHARLES ST. LEON *and* DON FELIX *are seen seated in military undress.*

CHARLES ST. LEON.

At dawn the troops must all be under arms,
For with her youngest light I shall command
The signal for the storm.

DON FELIX.

The midnight hour
Has told its heavy chime, and still we wake.

Enter BERNARDINE.

BERNARDINE (*to* DON FELIX).

Ah! signor, here am I, like an old spavined horse, without a leg to stand on. 'Twas all Madame Gertrude; she wouldn't stay quiet, but trotted after you like a little drummer that can't step his thirty-two inches, and with me for her cavalier. Not being much of geographers, and no kind star to give us a hint of the way, we wandered about like beautiful meteors in a bog, or we should have given you our good company full three hours ago.

DON FELIX.

Where did you leave your mistress?

BERNARDINE.

At a cottage hard by, waging dire war with an omelet. She'll make a very tidy subaltern, if you can only fit her with a military doublet and appendages. She'd soon learn the word of command, I'll be bound for her.

CHARLES ST. LEON (*to* DON FELIX).

Bear her to yonder tent, and on the morrow
You can convey her to a place of safety.

[*Exit* DON FELIX.

(*to* BERNARDINE).

Go, get thee now to rest, and when the voice
Of chanticleer sings welcome to the dawn,
Arouse me. Take just note o' the time. Good night!

[*Exit.*

BERNARDINE (*alone*).

Suppose now the morning should find me lapped in most exquisite oblivion, with my brains in a state of mental intoxication, and my mind's eye a-truanting after some of the black-eyed fairies of this land o' Goths. Body o' me! if I should oversleep myself, and drown the crowing of the cock with those nasal harmonies which the vulgar call snoring, I may stand a chance to lose my dignity; and a pretty figure I should cut among the menials with my feathers clipped. I shouldn't like to be the jackdaw of the fable. I'll therefore just put a remembrancer between the sheets; for I recollect my good old grannam, who was the very perfection of washerwomen, used at nights to lie at

close quarters with a brace of prickly chestnuts, and so whenever she rolled over upon her back she got such a persuasive twinge as never failed to carry her recollection incontinently to the foul linen. I cannot do better than strive to profit by so good a grandmother's example.

[*Exit.*

SCENE IX.

As Scene VII. Act III.

ST. LEON *is discovered, seated on a narrow stone ledge projecting from the wall of his dungeon.*

ST. LEON (*alone*).

My drowsy senses woo the calm of sleep
To shut them out from horror; but, alas!
The truant blessing mocks their eagerness,
And leaves them in this sepulchre of life
A prey to all the pangs of consciousness.
Wealth! thou distorted idol, at whose base
Man falls in selfish reverence, thou hast dried
The sap of all my joys, so sunny once,
And from their withered elements have sprung

Plagues into sturdy life. Capricious fortune!
How the fool courts thee! Whilst he views thee smile,
He deems his sum of happiness secure,
But when he turns to thank thee for thy favours,
He finds thee gone unto another.

DE LUQUE *unbars the door, and enters.*

DE LUQUE.

Well!
Has thy night's rest been gentle? hast thou done
Thy master's bidding?

ST. LEON.

Swells thy tone so high?
Montalban owns no master but his God!

DE LUQUE.

We have no Platos now. A few brief hours
Shall teach thee how completely thou'rt my slave,
And worse than manacles shall gall thy heart.
Thy days shall pass in toil for my behoof,
And night shall only yield thee thy repose
To dream how best to serve me. Yet thou know'st me
But as my words have pictured me; ere long
My actions shall convince thee what I am.

ST. LEON.

I dare thee to the utmost of thy malice.

Try what thy vengeance can; I will endure,
And mock thee in my agonies.

DE LUQUE.

I'll prove thee.
When thy impatient bowels yearn for bread
Thou shalt regale thy craving eyes alone
On smoking luxuries; and, when the spasm
Gives warning of exhaustion, thou shalt taste
The niggard aliment to bring thee back
To the redoubled agonies of life.

ST. LEON.

Is this thine utmost, monster? I despise it.
Take this poor body, tear it limb by limb,
Invent new racks to make the sinews start
And stiffen with their pangs, at sight of which
A Mexican would sicken and turn pale,
Still the soul laughs at thee; o'er that thy power
Is impotent. Here take my full defiance.

DE LUQUE.

Ha! bravely done! but when the lingering hours
Shall mock thee in their dull and tardy flight;
When comes the season of repose to all,
And thou art doomed to watch; when filth shall eat
Into thy festering flesh, and vermin crawl
Over thy blistered skin, in foul disport;
When torturing cramp shall twist thy sinews up,

And loathsome ulcers waste thee to the bones:
When thy blood thickens with disease, and flows
Through its clogged channels, tinging in its way
Thy skin with its own sickly hue; and when
The stream of suffering shall obstruct thine eye,
And thy long matted hair supplies the lash
That stripes thee into humbleness; to these
When I shall add the tortures of the spirit,
Wilt thou not tame, and crouch, and ask for mercy?

ST. LEON.

Never!—Ask mercy of a demon?—nay,
Add Egypt's plagues to all that thou hast named,
And be my life but one long lapse of torture,
Still I defy thee!

DE LUQUE (*vehemently*).

Hast thou got my gold?
Produce, or by the lurid light of hell,
I'll pluck the drossy treasure from thy heart!

ST. LEON.

Now 'tis my turn to triumph. (*Discharge of artillery heard.*)

DE LUQUE.

Ha! the work
Of slaughter has begun. I quit thee now,
Resolved to leave my body in the trench
Rather than yield me prisoner. Should I see
Success desert my standard, I shall come

To make my business sure. Within my grasp

(*Draws a dagger.*)

Behold a dudgeon, steeped to th' very hilt
In poison, whose unfailing potency
Will bring on tardy death by slow degrees
With dire preluding agonies. With this,
Should fortune play me foul, I shall inflict
The wound that leaves thee to a lingering death.
Meanwhile, thou must within a narrower cell
Enjoy thy loneliness:—retire.

(*Unlocks a door.* ST. LEON *enters.*)

Now then
To triumph in my vengeance, or to die. [*Exit.*

(*During this speech the constant explosion of artillery is heard.*)

SCENE X.

The country near DE LUQUE'S *castle. The discharge of cannon continued.*

Enter GERTUDE, *much agitated, followed by* BERNARDINE.

GERTRUDE.

Be still, my heart! at every fierce discharge

The tingling blood leaps through each throbbing vein
With dread precipitation, and my brain
Tosses in tumult wild. The voice of death
Comes thundering on the breeze. Again! that sound
(*Guns still heard.*)
Strikes like a knell; how the crammed grave will yawn
For this! I sicken at the very thought.

BERNARDINE.

Nay, Madame Gertrude, those villanous clutchers of other men's chattels will all be graved in the maws of magpies, before we shall yawn after another waking. They'll be embowelled with other offal, ere the sun shall bid the east another good morrow. I took a peep at the castle just now, and saw the walls tumbling down, like old trees in a thunderstorm. Bless you, there a'n't enough of 'em to hold it out long, and if it wasn't for their bullying commander-in-chief, they'd have cried us mercy at the blast of the first gun.

GERTRUDE.

But he's of generous blood, and the hot impulse
May lead him on to peril. How I dread
To think of what may be! (*Guns heard.*) The battle thickens.
Hark how the cannon thunder on our ears!
The din of havoc and destruction's voice
Brawl to the listening heavens!

BERNARDINE.

It will soon be over with 'em now, take my word for it. They'll have no time for paternosters. The crows are croaking over 'em already. The rogues will never get merry over another night's plunder. Don't fret yourself, Madam Gertrude, about Don Felix; he's safe enough. He won't have occasion to soil his courtly fingers with those raggamuffins—the soldiers will take all that off his hands.

GERTRUDE.

I cannot bear this riot of the soul.
Suspense o'erlays my spirit, clogged with all
It's medley of dull hopes and duller fears,
And I can scarcely breathe beneath the load.

BERNARDINE.

Suppose, lady, I mount yonder tree, and see how they are getting on. I'll soon bring you good news, I warrant me—barring accidents. If I can get a sight of 'em through the smoke, I'll just step back and make the best report I can of the matter. But mind you don't stir till I return.

[*Exit.*

GERTRUDE.

The firing slackens now. (*Guns only heard at intervals.*)
Could I but see
How thrives the contest, 'twould at least relieve
The anguish of suspense. I feel within

A rack that shapes ten thousand agonies
Which the tongue cannot utter.

BERNARDINE (*without*).

There they are at it—give and take—bull and matadore! A double pistole to a gilded counterfeit against the bull. The king's lieges are doing death's work as if they'd a rare knack at their trade! They've made a breach in the castle walls as wide as the throat of the renowned Gargantua, when he did up six pilgrims in a salad. Now they mow down the rebels, like a parcel of wild thistles. Down with 'em, the dogs,—down with 'em, the cutpurses! They are most of 'em grinning with their faces uppermost. How agreeable they'll look in the sunshine! Huzza! brave boys, we win it. Strike down the cut-throats! Bravo! carbonado the mongrels! (*Noise of firing ceases: tumult of assault heard.*) How our bold fellows mount the breach. Brave lads! now they deal about 'em like hawks in a dovecot; now,—bodikins! but they are driven back by that Hector of a rebel chief! (BERNARDINE *runs in.*) Never fear, lady, we win it!

GERTRUDE.

Nay, Bernardine, thy words bespoke defeat.
I can no longer tarry here. Away!
I'll to the field of strife, result what may. [*Exit.*

BERNARDINE.

And I must follow close in her wake, or my credit will be at zero. [*Exit.*

SCENE XI.

The outside of DE LUQUE'S *castle. Part of the moat choked up with rubbish. A large breach appears in the walls, in which are the dead bodies of several rebels. A tumultuous fight is still carried on. A party of besiegers mount the breach, where a desperate struggle ensues.* DE LUQUE *attacks and repulses them. He stands alone in the opening. The attack is renewed; he drives back the assailants single-handed. Just as he has repulsed them, a musket ball strikes him. He rushes upon the stage.*

DE LUQUE.

Advance, ye cowards! still De Luque defies ye.

He now engages CHARLES *and* DON FELIX. *After a short conflict he disarms the latter, and the blade of his own sword snaps to the hilt. He springs upon* CHARLES, *and drags him to the moat. Just as he is about to plunge him in, he is himself struck by a second ball, when he relaxes his grasp, and falls backwards into the water.*

CHARLES ST. LEON (*coming forward*).

Now raise the shouts of victory.

(*Troops shout.* GERTRUDE *rushes in, followed by* BERNARDINE, *and falls into the arms of* DON FELIX.)

BERNARDINE.

I'm sure this is a most eloquent blowing-up! We've done the emperor a signal service, and to my mind one well worth the rewarding. I look to be lord of the butler's pantry at the very least.

ST. LEON *appears in the ruins, making his way over the rubbish. He enters.*

ST. LEON.

My life is ebbing fast, but a few sands
Are left to run; I have not long—not long
To suffer here. But I shall die in peace,
And death is welcome. (*Sees* CHARLES.) Ah! that form—
who art thou?
Speak!—'tis my son—eternal powers! my son!

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Poor madman! though his years have not reach'd mine,
And scarce his beard has stiffen'd from the down,
He calls me son.

ST. LEON.

I am not mad, and still
I call thee son—St. Leon calls thee son.

(*All express surprise.*)

Yes, Charles, behold thy sire! Though young to sight,
Still eighty winters have passed o'er this head,
Nor left the lines of age. A poison'd dagger
Has forced its deadly venom through my blood,

Which soon shall free my soul; but ere I go,
I have a secret to impart.

CHARLES ST. LEON.

Be brief.

ST. LEON.

My sudden rise from poverty to wealth
Arose from a possession of the means
Of changing dross to gold. I further learned
The cunning secret of prolonging life,
And changing age to youth, but having now
Divulged thus far, the spell must be dissolved;
Age o'er me creeps again, and ere he die,
St. Leon shall wear the habit of his years.

(*His hair gradually becomes grey, and all the marks of extreme age return upon him.*)

CHARLES ST. LEON *and* GERTRUDE.

'Tis indeed our father. (*Each embraces him.*)

ST. LEON (*in a faint voice*).

Bless ye both, my children.

(*He sinks upon the ground exhausted. The* ANGEL OF DEATH *descends and waves his hand over him. He dies. The curtain falls.*)

THE END.

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